

The Castaways

Chapter 1

Darrell and Jackie Hayes had been married for 20 years, they lived in the Bay area, and he commuted to a very high paying job as a Computer Programmer and IT Specialist for a huge Silicon Valley Firm. To say they were Polar Opposites would be a huge understatement. At one time Jackie was as Liberal as Darrell was, but an attack outside her dorm building during her Junior year at Berkeley where they both went to school changed all that. Someone once said that the difference between a Liberal and a Conservative New Yorker was the Liberal hadn't been mugged yet. Her views changed radically after she survived the attack with little more damage than the \$50.00 in her purse. She soon became an NRA Firearms instructor, taught Self-defense classes at the local YMCA evenings and weekends, and held a rare California CCW for her Glock model 36 .45acp. She didn't change much until after they were married 2 years later when he landed the 6-figure job in Silicon Valley fresh out of college, but the seeds were planted.

The change was so gradual that Darrell didn't really notice until 1 day when he found a gun in her purse. He recoiled like it was a snake, and they had their first of many fights over that. One subject of their many disagreements was he was a total cheapskate except for when it came to donating money and time to every Radical Environmentalist and Liberal cause that came up. They must have been on every Liberal mailing list because the poor mailman commented more than once that they were going to be the reason for his early retirement on medical disability with a broken back.

Despite Darrell earning a conservative 6 figure income, Jackie drove an 8 yr old Hyundai that was as gutless as Darrell was. He claimed the 40mpg it got was helping save the environment. She said it was more like saving Darrell some dough! Even though he had a license, Darrell didn't own a car, didn't drive, and rode the politically correct van pool to work, which got there an hour early and left an hour later than he needed.

After 20 years of putting up with him, Jackie was going to divorce Darrell and marry a real man, not a Liberal Tree-hugging Gian metrosexual like Darrell. Darrell did have his good points, he was a wiz kid programmer, wrote programs worth millions to his employer each year, and could fix anything electronic that he wanted to. Unfortunately, that didn't include any appliances in the house, and he'd rather either do without or call a repairman than work on something as mundane as a blown fuse.

The 2nd Honeymoon trip to the Cook Islands was Darrell's idea in hopes of patching up their relationship after she told him that he either had to change his ways, or she was leaving him. A week later, he presented her with the tickets. She was ecstatic until she got a look at the itinerary. When she got a look at their itinerary, she repacked her fanny pack - she just might

need it! She removed everything that wasn't needed on a South Seas Desert Island or in Australia since it was going in her checked luggage thanks to the Patriot Act. She added several items that she thought might be useful:

Swiss Army Knife w/ Scissors Assorted Band-Aids 6 triple antibiotic ointment packets
1 well-sealed plastic vial of Ammonia 1 packet of Baking Soda 3 pair Exam Gloves
1 roll medical tape 1 Self-adhesive ACE bandage 1 Roller Gauze 2 Large Bandanas
Assorted sterile pads 1 travel tube Purell Handwash 1 tube Betadine solution
3 Panty Shields 12 Benedryl 12 Imodium AD 50 Advil 1 LED light (blue)
1 tube Burn free Gel 1 tube Aloe Vera Gel 3 large safety pins
6 feet of Surgical Tubing 1 quart military plastic canteen with cover, cup and stove
4 12oz Juice Box OJ drinks 8 servings of Tang powder in foil pouches
1 bottle polar pure water disinfectant 2 bars of trioxane fuel
1 Sportsman's Tarp (Mylar laminated poly tarp) 2 Contractor trash bags
1 bag of hard candy (lemon drops) Butane lighter Magnesium Firestarter, Ferrochromium rod
and striker PJ saturated Cotton Balls in 35mm film can
Signal mirror - plastic 550 Paracord -100 yds. 35mm film can fishing kit
1 roll stainless steel wire 1 fine mesh gill net & 6 1/2oz weights
Gerber Exchange-a-Blade w/ extra Course Wood Blade Survival Cards
1 tube Military Grade DEET Large sheet of clear plastic
10 feet plastic tubing large sheet heavy duty aluminum foil - folded
1 tube SPF30 Sun block Mini sewing kit Compass and maps
1 Roll compressed TP (no tube) 1 set swim goggles 1 7x25 Monocular
2 pair Wells Lamont leather palm work gloves 1 cheap skeletonized diver's knife
Duct Tape Bailing Wire Gerber 800 Legend Multiplier w/ 3 spare saw blades, Hex drive
adapter w/ bits

She thought the last 3 items might be needed to fix the bus. Since she took her holster off the fanny pack belt, she had room for the Gerber Multiplier on the belt. Everything was packed inside Ziploc Freezer Bags so she knew they would be waterproof.

She clipped the Cold Steel LTC Kukhri in its Kydex sheath with a custom piggy back pouch onto the belt of the fanny pack. The pouch included: SAK, MFS, 35mm film can full of PJ saturated cotton balls, mini fishing kit, DMT Duafold knife sharpener, green LED light, bottle of Polar Pure tablets, small roll of snare wire, and large florescent orange Contractor's Trash Bag.

The 18-hour redeye flight from California to Australia was long and boring, and Jackie tried to read or sleep whenever possible. Darrell was listening to some sort of Middle Eastern music he picked up at his favorite New Age store. When they landed 18 hours later, she was not in a very good mood. Having to take a 3-day drive in a broken-down old school bus to the opposite side of Australia didn't improve it. Darrell was loaded, but a cheapskate, and booked this "bargain tour" which included an 18-hour red-eye flight to Australia, a bus trip across the continent

instead of flying in air conditioned comfort, and when they finally made it to the Airport, what passed for a plane wouldn't have been flown by the most disreputable bush pilot in Alaska, at least one that valued his life. It was an ancient Cessna A185F Amphibian that was probably manufactured before Darrell was born. The pilot was a piece of work as well, and Jackie could have sworn she saw him nipping at a flask as they arrived. She had come halfway around the world to try and patch their marriage back together, and wasn't about to let the fact that her cheapskate husband booked a third-rate tour package to some no-name resort in the Cook islands stop her. When they got off the bus, she took one look at the plane and the pilot, and opened her bags, strapped on her fanny pack, the Cold Steel Kukhri with piggyback pouch, and her Gerber tool. The look she gave Darrell told him he had better not say anything. Besides, he'd learned not to argue with a woman with a knife.

Darrell and the pilot started to load their gear into the plane, except Jackie insisted they ride in the back, and put the gear in the front. She figured if this idiot couldn't land the plane, she didn't want her last memory to be of her face smashing through the windshield. The pilot shrugged his shoulders and loaded the plane. Jackie climbed in back, buckled in tight and snugged Darrell's belt down too. She wrapped her arm around him to give him a hug, and he thought she just wanted to be close instead of splitting them up, and didn't say anything.

The resort they were going to was in the Cook Islands, and they were going to have an island all to themselves with a grass hut and 500 gallons of fresh water to last the week, and an ice chest full of food. The hut had been stocked by a boat earlier that week, and the plane was going to drop them off, and pick them up a week later. Jackie just hoped she could make it through the week without killing Darrell. She had hoped he could quit his cheapskate ways for at least a week to save their marriage, but she wasn't holding out too much hope for their marriage after the last couple of days.

Finally, the pilot started the elderly engine, which coughed and sputtered like an asthmatic chain smoker. Jackie was all set to tell him to shut down - they'd rather walk, when he started taxiing quickly to the runway. He was moving too fast to jump, so Jackie resigned herself to Fate. The engine coughed and sputtered all the way to the runway, and didn't sound much better when he shoved the throttle to the stops to take off. She grabbed a piece of soft luggage in case they crashed, and stuck a duffle bag in Darrell's lap as well. While she wasn't a very religious person, she found herself praying the whole way to the island.

After almost an hour of flying over blue water, she spotted a group of islands. Obviously, the pilot did too, since he slowed down and lowered the flaps in preparation to land. Obviously, he was either in a hurry, or couldn't afford the gas, and continued right on course without circling to make sure he was landing into the wind. Jackie's first clue that something was wrong was when she saw an island about a quarter mile to her right. She knew the islands weren't that close together from studying the map. She realized too late the idiot pilot had overshot his landing, and was trying to land in the rough water between the islands. Anyone with half a

brain knows that a Cessna Amphibian is NOT designed to land on more than a foot or so of chop, because it lands on floats, not on it's fuselage like a Catalina. As they got closer, she saw the swells were at least 3 feet tall between the islands. She yelled to Darrell "We're going to crash, take your glasses off, and put your face in the duffle bag NOW!" Darrell was slow to react, but at least got his glasses off before the plane hit the water and tumbled as a pontoon hit a swell crosswise.

When they came to, Jackie reached over the pilot's body and unlatched the door as the plane started to sink. She kicked the door open, grabbed Darrell by the collar of his shirt and pulled him out of the plane. He still had a death grip on the duffle, so Jackie had a little difficulty getting him out of the plane. Finally, they made it out right before the plane went under. All they managed to get out with was the clothes on their back, Jackie's fanny pack, and Darrell's duffle bag. They were closer to the one island than the other, a couple of hundred yards versus five miles she estimated, so Jackie swam to the closer island, towing Darrell behind her. She wasn't surprised to learn that Darrell never learned how to swim. Luckily, the duffle was acting as a life preserver, or she might have been tempted to leave him behind.

As she approached the island, she could see a break in the reef, and could see the current was pulling them toward it. As they got closer, the wave action caught them, and they body surfed through the opening into a calm lagoon. After a couple more minutes of swimming, Jackie was able to touch bottom, and told Darrell to get off his lazy butt and stand up, she wasn't dragging his sorry carcass one extra foot. Whining and sniveling about losing his designer sunglasses, he struggled to his feet, staggered to the beach, and promptly collapsed. Jackie left him where he fell, and got up to look around. She didn't see any hut, and figured the pilot dropped them on the wrong island. The sun was high in the sky, and she couldn't see the other island due to the glare. Her survival training kicked in, and she realized she was wearing wet salty clothes, and needed to at least wring the salt water out of them. Seeing no one but Darrell around, she stripped and wrung as much of the salt water out of her clothes as possible, and put them back on. She was wearing a white cotton long sleeve blouse and long white cotton pants, so she wouldn't get sunburned.

She knew they needed to get out of the sun, so she woke up Darrell and told him they either needed to get under shade, or get a horrible sunburn. He said "Great Honey, there should be a hut on the beach with plenty of shade."

Jackie just shook her head "Darrell - We're on the WRONG island! We crashed when the idiot pilot flew to the wrong island and tried to land between them. There's NO hut, NO water and NO food! I doubt if anyone is going to look for us for at least a week or two, maybe longer."

Her words finally penetrated the Sheeple Fog he walked around in most of the time. Looking around he didn't see the hut. "Where's the Hut?"

"I told you we're on the wrong island!"

“You mean there’s No Hut, no food and No Water? We’re Gonna Die!”

“Darrell Calm Down Right NOW! I have a few tricks up my sleeve that might fix things so we can survive until we get picked up, but I need your help, so get a grip and get with the program!”

Chapter 2

Jackie ignored Darrell for a couple of minutes, and sat on the sand, inventorying her fanny pack. Everything had come through the accident OK. She was glad the Ammonia vial hadn't broken, or everything would really stink! She repacked her kit and walked back up the shoreline. There wasn't much of a shoreline. The entire island was maybe a mile long and half a mile wide and the highest point had to be no more than 50 feet above High tide. A good storm would wash almost everything off this island. Maybe being on the east side of Australia, the big continent would buffer it from the biggest storms. The good news was there were several coconut palm trees on the island, and a few of them looked like they had recently ripened and fallen, since they were still whole. Jackie decided then and there they couldn't stay on this island any longer than necessary. There wasn't any clean drinkable water, and no more than a week's worth of food between the coconuts and what fish they could catch. She walked over to the coconut tree, and gathered up the fallen fronds to start a fire. The driest ones would burn OK, and the fresher ones could be used to build a primitive lean-to to keep the sun off them during the day. Since they were so short of water, she would restrict their activity to 4 hours after sunrise and 4 hours before sunset. That wouldn't give them much daylight to do stuff, but they couldn't work up a sweat with as little water as they had. Looking around, she saw a stand of bamboo-like plants that gave her an idea. If she could cut down one of the palm trees, and 2 6ft 1-2" diameter poles out of this stuff, and a smaller tree, they could build a simple outrigger raft that they could paddle over to the other island. The sun was still high overhead, so she couldn't see across the water, and she decided their first task was to make shelter.

"Hey Darrell - Get your Lazy Butt over here!" Darrell was in mid-mope, so Jackie realized that if they were to survive it would be up to her - she could kill him later! She took out one of the contractor bags, opened it, and using the scissors from her Gerber tool, carefully cut it all the way open to a plastic sheet. She cut a 3 foot piece of Paracord off the roll, and tied it to one corner, then propped that corner up with a palm frond. She set the other 2 sides down and covered the corners with sand, then tied the other end of the Paracord to a piece of wood and buried it in the sand. Stretching the cord and the sheet, she moved the prop until the front of the lean-to was as high as it was going to get. She had shelter; she wondered what Darrell was going to do! Taking her Kukhri, she chopped open the coconut and tasted the coconut milk. It wasn't the greatest she had tasted, but it beat dying of thirst. When she finished the coconut, she yelled at Darrell again. Slowly he dragged himself up from the beach. When he saw she had shelter and a coconut, his attitude improved. As he got closer, she could see what was going on in his mind.

"No way Darrell, go get your own shelter and coconut! This whole fiasco was YOUR idea! If you hadn't been so cheap, we could have gone on a real vacation, instead of some CHEAP 3rd rate tour package. I'm sick and tired of living like peasants while you send all your money to the latest "Save the Planet" scam! How do you know if they saved the planet if you're not there to enjoy it? You know, if you weren't so smart, I'd think you were a total idiot! Every time

some hustler comes up with a new “Save the Planet” con, you give them everything. Did you ever realize that they’re getting richer, the planet isn’t getting any cleaner, and we’re eating Spaghetti-O’s 3 nights a week, when you’re not out protesting something or other!”

“Are you finished yet?”

“I guess so.”

“OK, Jackie, I’m totally out of my element here, I don’t have a clue what to do, but obviously you do. I’m sorry I belittled you all these years, I just never figured something like this would happen to us.”

“OK, Darrell, it’s OK - I just wish we weren’t in this either. The bad news is we’re on the wrong island, with hardly any food or water, and no one will be looking for us for at least a week. The good news is the island we are supposed to be on is right over there - about 5 miles away. Bad news - the waters around here are known to have large man-eating sharks. Good news - I can make a simple raft to paddle over there. Bad news - I need your help, and this is going to take a few days. Bad news - we can only work for a few hours each day, and might run out of water between now and then. This is what I need you to do. I need help cutting down this palm tree to build a raft, and I need you to cut several 6 foot sections of this bamboo-like stuff over here, and we need either a smaller tree, or 2 smaller sections of palm tree for outriggers. I’ve got just enough Paracord to lash them together. We still need paddles, then we need to figure the best time to try it. We’d be paddling into the prevailing wind, but hopefully there’s a time of day that the wind dies down to give us a chance. It will take us at least 2-3 hours of steady paddling to cross this strait, but if we don’t do it, we’ll die within a week from lack of water.”

“Ok, Jackie, I’ll do whatever I have to so we can survive. I’m just glad it’s not hopeless.”

“First thing we need to do is make you a shelter and get you out of the sun. Can you round up a couple of palm fronds. They need to be about 4 feet long.”

While he gathered fronds, Jackie cut up her other trash bag, leaving one spare in her pouch. She tied a piece of Paracord to it, and when Darrell came back with the fronds, she tied the other end to it, buried the back of his lean-to in the sand, and quickly erected his lean-to. Then she cut open a coconut for him and handed it to him.

“Darrell, we can’t drink too many of these per day, or we’ll get sick, so we need to lay down from about 10 o’clock to about 3 or 4 pm to stay out of the heat of the day. It only gets up to about 80 degrees here, but that can still make you use water.”

“Thanks Jackie, I’ll do whatever you suggest.”

“Darrell, we need to rest in the shade until later this afternoon, then we need to get working. I’m going to get started on chopping down that coconut tree over there, and I need you to take this saw and cut down some 6 foot lengths of that bamboo-like stuff. I need 2 for the raft, and a couple of extra for spears and stuff. Hopefully my Kukhri will chop down that palm tree Ok.”

“OK, Jackie, just let me know what you want to do.”

“Darrell, try to get some sleep, and don’t breathe through your mouth or talk, we need to save water.”

“OK, Jackie, I’ll see you later this afternoon.”

Later that afternoon, Jackie woke Darrell, handed him the Gerber Exchange-a-Blade with the regular saw blade in it, since the coarse blade wouldn’t work too well on the bamboo. Darrell walked over to the bamboo stand, and had several sections cut in about half an hour. Jackie had a much tougher time with the coconut palm. When Darrell finished, he walked over to help Jackie. She had made some progress, but was getting tired. She handed him the Kukhri, and explained what she was trying to do. Since he was bigger and stronger than Jackie, he made quicker progress, and turned the corner about half an hour later. After another half hour of heavy chopping, he leaned against the tree, and it crashed down to the ground. Jackie checked the coconuts, and only 1 was smashed, but the meat was still salvageable. She harvested the other coconuts and piled them off to one side. She took the largest poles and saved them for the outriggers, and took the skinnier one and lashed the cheap diving knife in her kit to it as a spear. She lashed the surgical rubber to the other end, and fashioned a primitive Hawaiian Sling Spear. She looked down at her shoes, and was grateful she was still wearing her deck shoes. She told Darrell she was going to go get dinner, and grabbed her swim goggles and headed for the lagoon. She waded out to the lagoon, and it was like shooting fish in a barrel. Finally she selected one of the largest reef fishes in the lagoon, and speared it. She didn’t have a barb to hold the fish on, so she stabbed the fish, then quickly lifted the spear point out of the water to hold the fish on the spear. She walked it to the water’s edge, and took it off the spear and carried it by the tail to their shelters. She cleaned it with her SAK, and started a fire using palm fronds. She wrapped the fish in aluminum foil, and set it in the fire. Then she showed Darrell how to open a coconut, and they shared the coconut milk, then she cut the coconut into pieces, and roasted the meat by the fire. When the fish was done, she cut it down the spine and handed Darrell her other SAK. She told him to be careful, the foil was hot. They ate the fish as quickly as they could eating with a knife only then they dug into the roasted coconut meat. Somehow roasting it made it sweeter, almost like candy. It was almost totally dark when they finished. Jackie told Darrell that they were safe sleeping on the ground, that the website said that none of these islands have snakes, reptiles, or any animal life to speak of.

Chapter 3

The next morning, Jackie noticed the wind had really died down! She guessed the wind died overnight, and needed several hours to build back up to full strength. While she worked on getting off the island, she paid attention to the wind strength and direction. They chopped the fronds off the coconut palm, and used some of them to cover the lean-tos to provide better shade. She stacked a bunch of green fronds upwind of the fire in case she needed a quick signal fire, and kept a small fire going with the drier palm fronds. The dried out fronds burned fairly well, and she took advantage of that. She realized they would need to chop down another palm tree to finish the job. She sat down with Darrell to discuss her ideas and get any suggestions he might have, after all he wasn't a total idiot, just a Liberal Cheapskate. "Darrell, I need your help. We need to chop down another palm tree to make outrigger floats and paddles. We don't have any other wood on the island to make paddles out of since the ancient Polynesians made their paddles out of hardwoods, so we have to make do with what we have."

"Ok, Jackie, if we chop down a tree that's at least 10 feet tall, that gives us 2 six-foot outriggers and 2 paddles."

"How do you figure that?"

"Chop the tree in half around 6 feet, then split the halves down the middle. Seems to me the outriggers aren't supporting our weight, just acting as a lever to keep the log from overturning, so all it has to do is float and offer enough resistance to keep the log from rolling that way. Paddles are normally made flat on both sides, but the important part is a reasonably flat area to push or pull through the water to increase the mechanical advantage of your arms and hands. If we chop the top half and split it down the middle, all we have to do is fashion a handle then improve the paddle with any time we have left."

"You know you're pretty smart sometimes Darrell?"

"I think the smartest thing I ever did was marry you, and the dumbest thing I ever did was book this cheap trip. If we ever get off this island, I'm taking you on a REAL vacation!"

"OK - I noticed this morning the wind died down overnight, and it's still fairly light, so if we leave at first light, we stand a good chance of making it to the other island. I still want to finish building the raft, then I want to take a day and get you familiar with how to ride and paddle it. The position will be uncomfortable for you, but we don't have enough time to hollow out the log to fashion seats, so we'll have to ride on top straddling the log. You'll have to keep your legs out of the water because it will increase the drag, and might attract sharks, so that means you'll basically be kneeling straddling the log, and almost sitting on your heels, which will be holding you to the log. All you'll have to hold you in place will be your thigh and leg muscles. It will be rough getting through the breakers at the reef opening, and hopefully the chop will die

down when the wind does, so we won't have to fight 3 feet of chop too!"

"Don't worry Jackie, if I have to do it to live, I'll handle it! Let's get that other tree chopped down now while we have some time left. How about you go fishing while I chop it down."

"Deal - see that tree over there (points). That's the one I want, just do it like last time." She handed him the Kukhri, and picked up the fishing spear. As she waded into the lagoon, she could hear Darrel chopping the tree down - this might work after all! If they actually got off this island and lived to tell about it, their marriage might have a chance.

As she waded into deeper water, the fish were so numerous that it was hard to choose. Finally, she spotted a fish that looked like the last one she speared, and quickly stretched the surgical rubber, loading the spear gun. When she was within a couple of feet, she released her grip, and the blade shot forward, impaling the fish. She quickly lifted the blade out of the water, and carried it to the beach. She cleaned the fish and wrapped it in foil after adding a teaspoon of salt water for flavor, and was just about to put it in the fire when she heard Darrell yell "Timber" and heard the tree fall. "That was fast" she thought to herself. After she put the fish in the fire, she got up and walked over to the palm tree. They gathered the coconuts, and started chopping off the fronds. Between the two trees, they had enough coconut milk to last several days. She still had the 4 juice boxes in her kit, but she was saving those for just before the trip to give Darrell as much energy as possible. When they finished the palm tree, it was starting to get hot as the sun had been up for a couple of hours, so she told Darrell to grab a couple of ripe coconuts and head over to the shelters.

"Which ones are Ripe?"

"The ones you can hear the milk sloshing around in."

"OK, be there in a second."

Darrell grabbed 4 ripe coconuts and carried them over to the lean-to. He'd handed the Kukhri back to Jackie, he still didn't like knives. He was curious about the blade, since he had never seen a knife like that, only the ones in the movies.

"Jackie, what kind of knife is that?"

Jackie sat down in front of her shelter and started to open a coconut. There was a lot of stuff to get off before they got to the coconut milk, but she had to be careful not to spill any. After she finished opening a coconut and handing it to Darrell, she said "It's called a Kukhri. They're from Nepal."

"You mean they use those on Mt. Everest?"

“No dear, that’s Tibet. But you’re close, it’s located between India and China. Remember reading about the Gurkhas and the British in WWII?”

“Vaguely. Wasn’t Nepal a British Colony?”

“Exactly. At one time the Brits owned Nepal, and the best way to earn money in Nepal was to become a member of the British Army. The Nepalese Mercenaries, known as Gurkhas, were some of the fiercest fighters that fought under the British flag. They gave the Japanese fits! Anyway, they made and carried an indigenous knife called the Kukhri. Theirs were made out of old automotive leaf springs, but the blade shape is the same. This is designed by Lynn Thompson in California, and is based on the Nepalese Kukhri. It’s made with modern steels, so it’s stronger, but as you can see, it’s one heck of a chopper. I was going to get a Bolo machete, but figured I might need a heavy chopper, so I ordered this from Cold Steel.

“I’m not into knives, but I’m impressed, this is almost easier to use than a hatchet.”

“That’s because of the weight distribution. All the weight is concentrated forward. While a hatchet would make short work of this palm tree, I can’t use it for much else, so this was a good compromise.”

“If we get back, remind me to write Lynn Thompson a thank-you letter! Talk about an endorsement - this knife, plus your knowledge is literally saving our lives.”

“Yeah, and you haven’t seen half my bag of tricks yet?”

“What else you have in that bag of tricks?” (pointing at her fanny pack)

“A whole bunch of stuff - anyway, breakfast is ready, let’s eat.”

After breakfast, they got as far under their lean-tos as possible and slept away the heat of the day.

Chapter 4

When they got up later that afternoon, Darrell told Jackie “Maybe we should face the log so the ridges lay back; if you’re worried about the drag from my legs, how about the drag from the log itself. I think the log would slide more easily through the water if the open ends of the ridges were laying back instead of facing forward. Also we need to shape a prow out of the front of the log to make it break the waves easier.”

“Great ideas Darrell, OK, I’ll turn the log around, and while I’m lashing it together, can you use the Kukhri to fashion some sort of bow. Just make sure your not swinging right into me in case you miss, like when I’m making the connections up front you might want to wait until I’m clear.”

“That reminds me, I need to be careful too - I doubt if you’ve got a suture kit in that bag!”

“Well I could, but I doubt if you’d like me suturing you using a fish hook as a needle!”

“Yikes, Definitely Not! I’ll make sure I’m really careful!”

Jackie got out the roll of Paracord, and Darrell’s eyes got big “Just how much of that stuff do you have?”

“I packed 100 yards of 550 pound Paracord. Good thing too, since we’ll use most of it lashing this raft together.”

“That’s pretty small for 100 yards.”

“I took it off the reel and rolled it into a ball to save space.” She got out her SAK and started lashing the 6 foot pole to the main log, leaving an equal amount on both sides. Darrell got out the Kukhri and started chopping the other log in two. By the time she finished lashing to poles to the main log, he had the log split into two sections, a 6 foot section, and a four foot section.

“Jackie, how do you split these logs in half?”

“Look around for something small, hard and heavy to beat on the back edge of the blade, and drive the blade through the wood. It’s called Batonning a blade. Some knives can’t take it, but the Kukhri can.”

Darrell looked around, and finally found a piece of wood. It was about a foot long and 3 inches in diameter. It didn’t look like palm or bamboo, maybe it drifted there. Darrell stood the larger piece on the ground, and set the blade onto the center of the log, and started beating the spine of the blade with the piece of wood. Eventually, it started going through the wood, and soon, he

had to move where he was hitting the blade towards the tip, since most of the blade was stuck in the wood. 10 minutes later he had the pontoon sections separated. It wasn't pretty, but it was in half. Jackie took the pontoons and lashed them to the outriggers flat side up, and by the time she was finished, he had the other piece of wood split in two.

"Darrell, tomorrow we start whittling the handles out of these using the Swiss Army Knives. Good thing I have two of them!"

Jackie set everything down, grabbed her spear, and went to go get dinner. Darrell got over his aversion to knives and very carefully opened a coconut. When Jackie came back, he handed the freshly opened coconut to her, and opened one for himself. Jackie was impressed; Darrell never did any thing like this before. She cleaned the fish and put it in the foil with a little salt water, then put it in the fire to cook. When they had drank the coconut milk, they broke the coconut, and roasted the meat by the fire. As the sun went down, they went to sleep

The next morning, Darrell started whittling a handle for the paddle while Jackie caught breakfast. After they ate, they kept whittling, even after they needed to stay out of the sun, since whittling wasn't strenuous work, and they weren't tired. By the end of the day, they had a reasonable facsimile of a paddle, but it wouldn't win any design contests. They were both 4 feet long, and about a foot wide at the widest point. The blade was 2 feet long and 1 foot wide. Since it was made out of coconut palm wood, it was light. Darrell was glad it was as thick as it was, since if they had made it like a canoe paddle design, it would have broken in half. As it was, if it was made out of hardwood, it would have weighed 20 pounds! Jackie went fishing again, and their diet while boring, kept them alive. The next morning, they would try out their raft in the lagoon. Darrell hoped it wasn't too heavy to drag into the water. Darrell was glad it was warm out, since they didn't have sleeping bags. The cool of the evening was a relief, and soon he was asleep.

At first light, Jackie and Darrell were up and dragging the raft to the lagoon. Jackie had the hard entry, and just fit between the outrigger and the raft, and climbed aboard. Darrell made like he was playing leapfrog, and was careful to place his hands firmly on the log. He slid forward into position right behind the rear outrigger pole, and Jackie explained canoeing basics to him, showed him how to do a bow stroke, an alternating bow and a J-stroke, which he needed to do a lot of to steer. They got the raft moving fairly quickly with both of them paddling, and Darrell soon got the hang of steering. They didn't try for the reef opening since they only had one shot at it, and couldn't risk damaging the raft by practicing. Jackie had taken her spear with her, and spied a big fish in deep water, so she told Darrell that she was going to dive off the front and go fishing, and to wait there to help her get it back to shore. He said OK, and she dove. 10 seconds later, she came up with a huge fish that was twice the size of the previous ones. She tied its tail to the raft and re-boarded, and 5 minutes later, they had the raft gently beached and a 20 pound fish for breakfast. While Jackie cleaned and gutted it, Darrell cut open 2 coconuts. He was getting pretty good with the Kukhri, and thought he'd like to get one later.

While they were eating breakfast Jackie explained that tomorrow, they had to be ready to go at first light, which meant taking down their shelters at dusk, and packing everything up. She'd use her gill net to carry all the coconuts they had left since they might need them if it took longer than they thought to get to the other island. Darrell looked at her, and she explained if they didn't make it to the other island before the wind came up, they'd have a long day of fighting the wind to get there. Their best strategy was a dawn sprint to the other island, since a more leisurely cruise would see them on the open water when the wind came up at 10:00 in the morning. Jackie told Darrell they had 4 orange juice boxes in her kit. She hoped it would be enough for a short burst of strength from both of them. The timing of their breakout from the reef was critical. They needed to wait for a lull in the waves, and shoot the gap while a wave wasn't breaking through the gap to have their best chance of clearing it. The waves averaged 14 seconds between sets of 3, so after the third wave, they'd have 14 seconds to get through the reef and the breaker zone. She said the breaker zone was about 25 yards deep, so it would take an all-out sprint to clear the breaker zone. After that, all they had to deal with was 2-3 foot swells and a breeze that was blowing them the wrong way. From dawn to about 10, the wind was maybe 5 knots or less, after 10 am, the wind velocity steadily rose to over 10 knots. At that point, they'd barely make headway against the wind if the current wasn't against them too. She had no idea what the currents were like out there, but she hoped they weren't more than 2 or 3 knots on the surface, or they'd never make it!

"Thanks for the encouraging words Jackie!"

"Just want you to know what we're up against. We CAN'T survive on this island, we'll run out of coconuts in a week, then we will be out of liquids. Even if we catch every fish in the lagoon, without fresh water, we're doomed. Our only chance is to make it to the other island. To stay here is certain death, but trying to do to the other island is very risky, but it's the best chance we have."

"Hopefully all that good karma I've been building up will pay off for us."

"Right now, I'll take any break we can get! Even if we get off this island, if we run out of water on the other island, we're dead, so we need to conserve water over there, even if they do have 500 gallons of water. They might not come to resupply the island for several weeks until someone else wants to use it. I'm not even sure if the tank's full, or if it's even good water, but whatever is there is better than what we have here."

Later that afternoon, Jackie brought out her monocular, and checked out the other island. She could clearly see a hut and a bunch of palm trees on the island. She handed the monocular to Darrell, who took a look as well to make sure. It definitely looked like the island they were supposed to be on. They were so stuffed from breakfast that they didn't bother going fishing again, and ate a coconut each for dinner. As the sun went down, Jackie took down their shelters, and repacked all the stuff in her fanny pack. As soon as the sun was up, they were good to go.

Chapter 5

They were up at dawn, then they each drank 2 juice boxes of Orange juice and were in the water within 15 minutes of dawn. Jackie had wrapped all the coconuts into the gill net, and lashed Darrell's duffle bag to the opposite side to counterbalance the load. She tied a 6 ft Paracord leash to each paddle, and attached it to the outrigger pole in case they capsized. Darrell was apprehensive, but wide awake and stroking powerfully. As they got closer to the reef opening, Jackie could see the swell was way down, and the breakers were only about a foot or two tall. As they approached the opening, Jackie saw a lull in the breakers, and yelled "NOW" and they rapidly accelerated toward the opening just as a wave passed, they made it through, and were past the breaker zone not more than a few seconds before the next set arrived. Jackie took her Monocular out of the pack quickly, sighted the island, and turned the bow of the raft so it was pointing directly at it. Jackie pointed at the island, put up her monocular, made sure the bag was closed, and told Darrell to start paddling hard again. They started on opposite sides, and switched sides after 5 strokes to keep on opposite sides to minimize steering. Since Darrell was much stronger than Jackie, he threw in a J-stroke at each change to make sure the craft was still pointed at the other island. The swells were only a foot tall, and the wind was very light, maybe 2-3 knots max of headwind. If they kept this pace up, they'd make it by 10:00am easily.

After an hour or two, they were halfway there, and they both were tired. Their stroke count was down from around 50 to 30 strokes per minute, but they were still making headway, even with the increased swell size. Darrell saw many big fish under the raft, but fortunately no sharks. He was extra careful to keep his feet out of the water just in case. Jackie was glad, because it reduced drag. It turned out Darrell was right after all, and the orientation of the log did matter. Darrell had fashioned a rakish bow that broke through the swells easily. The bad news was that Jackie was getting swamped by each swell since the bow was in no hurry to climb the swell, and she was wet from the waist down. Darrell was in the back, as dry as a bone, but stroking for all he was worth. He realized if they didn't make the island, dying of thirst would be the least of their worries. Finally, after 4 hours of hard paddling, they were within sight of the island, and noticed the swells were getting smaller, and the current started pulling them toward the island. They realized they were on the leeward side of the island, and the island itself was breaking the wind, waves, and current as it flowed around the island. Good thing too, since they were just about exhausted. Jackie started looking for an opening in the reef, and did a couple of sweep strokes to swing the bow a few degrees left. She yelled out "New Heading - I see the opening in the reef. Maintain this course until I say to switch!" Darrell could see the opening in the reef dead ahead, and stroked with renewed vigor.

When they finally reached the opening in the reef, Jackie almost panicked when she saw how narrow it was. She deliberately made the raft narrow just in case. She knew swimming for it would not work, since Darrell had nothing to use as a floatation support. Jackie figured that even if they damaged the raft going in, if she could salvage the Paracord, she could build another if they needed to. She yelled back to Darrell "I'm not sure the raft is small enough. We

might lose an outrigger going through, but we have to go, since I can't tow you and swim through the opening."

"Don't worry about me, just get us through. If I have to, I'll hold on to the end of the log and use that."

Jackie decided that the wind was now blowing from right to left, so they could sacrifice the right outrigger pontoon if they needed to. She steered towards the right of the center, and as they reached the opening, the right pontoon struck the reef. Instead of breaking, the pontoon simply rose up about a foot, the bamboo flexed and the pontoon continued on as if nothing had happened. They were IN!

Looking up, Jackie could see a huge hut about 20 yards inland surrounded by palm trees. Right next to the hut was a huge tank of water. Jackie hoped it was full. 5 minutes later, they beached the raft. Darrell made a smart move, and got off first so he could unlimber his aching legs and stand in the water. Using both of his hands, he pushed down on the log, and slowly slid off the back. If he hadn't had his paddle, he would have fallen backwards into the water. As is, his legs felt like rubber, so he turned around and carefully sat on the back of the raft facing backwards into the lagoon while the circulation returned to his feet. Jackie was having problems too, and managed to straddle the log and put her feet down in the water for the first time in 5 hours. They had made it, but were too tired to care.

Half an hour later, their thirst finally convinced them to move, and they staggered up to the hut after the two of them made sure the raft was beached. When they got to the hut, Jackie could see it had been prepared for them as the people had said. She lifted the lid and noticed that the tank was at least $\frac{3}{4}$ full, and it was fresh clean water, with no bugs or anything in it. She noticed the tank was plastic, and set into the ground. There was a pipe running out of it into the hut. When they got inside, she swore it looked like the set of Gilligan's Island. Maybe that's where they got the ideas for the huts. There was bamboo furniture, a huge hammock they could both sleep in, and with a little practice, maybe do something else later. Darrell yelled from the other side of the hut. The cooler they had mentioned was twice as big as Jackie had envisioned. It was full of tropical fruit and vegetables. On top of the cooler were several dozen eggs that Darrell had requested. He used to be a vegetarian until they got stranded, and wouldn't eat meat. Jackie hoped the changes in Darrell were permanent, or this would be a very short second honeymoon. Jackie walked back inside the hut, and found a primitive shower. It consisted of a "Solar Shower" and a waterproof privacy enclosure. She noticed the enclosure was easily big enough for two. Next to the enclosure were a cold water spigot and a primitive sink. "Well so much for hot and cold running water" thought Jackie, then immediately berated herself, because just that morning they were facing death due to dehydration or starvation.

Chapter 6

When they were finished checking out the hut, they both drank their fill of water, then laid down on the hammock.

“Darrell, It’s decision time. Do you want to Save the Planet, or Save our Marriage?”

“Jackie, even though this trip has been a total disaster so far, I’m glad we went. Being thrown into a life and death emergency has a way of clearing your thoughts and getting your priorities straight. If the planet wants to get saved, it’s going to have to do it without my help! I realized now that Nature is not a God, it’s just a fact of life, and except for us humans who can manipulate our environment, Life is rather brutish and short. I didn’t like killing those fish and chopping down those trees, but when it came down to my survival or theirs, I decided I’d rather live. I’ve decided that not all life on this planet is equal, and there is a natural order to things with us on top of the food chain. Sure we can get eaten by sharks or mauled by bears, but we can even the score by manufacturing a gun, knife or spear. Humans are natural tool builders, and we learned early on how to manipulate our environment. Our whole survival has been due to our manipulation of the environment. Just because we’re polluting the atmosphere and dumping waste into the ocean doesn’t mean it will continue forever. Either we’ll learn, and clean up after ourselves, or we will cease to exist as a species. Either way, Nature doesn’t need my help, and the Envirowackos as you call them definitely don’t need my money, and I wish they’d get a real job instead of fleecing the people, and publishing alarmist brochures just to entice us to send more money. I mean look around you - does it look like the planet is dying? Even as many people as there are on the planet, we’re barely affecting it. If what the alarmists said was true, there’d be medical waste covering these shores. I haven’t even seen a trash bag in weeks. It seems our pollution is really a local phenomenon, and only affects our coastal waters. Kind of like peeing in the backyard instead of using the bathroom, all you’re doing is polluting your back yard, not the entire country.”

“Darrell, Thanks for the Doctoral Dissertation, but did you say yes or no?”

Darrell walked over to Jackie, and gave her a big hug. “Dear, I want to save our marriage, can you forgive me for being so stupid?”

“You’ve been through a lot this week, and I want to work this out too. How about we both try to live a little and cut each other some slack. I don’t mind your environmental passion. I just don’t want it running our lives. I don’t mind driving a car that gets good gas mileage, I’d just like a newer one that is in better shape. Besides, with gas hitting \$3.00 a gallon this summer, it’s smart to save gas.”

Darrell gave Jackie a big hug, and they started to renew their marriage.

Chapter 7

The next morning, Jackie and Darrell took a closer look at their surroundings. They had a propane grill and a propane stove with a 20 pound bottle of gas that was full and a box next to it with dishes and utensils, as well as enough soap and shampoo to last several weeks. They included several large bath towels, several face cloths, and 4 large beach towels. Off to one side was a large screened gazebo with a picnic table and several large lanterns on hooks. It seemed they were set. Darrell was wondering what was in the duffle bag he had managed to salvage, and walked down to the raft and untied it. He brought it back to the hut, and it was full of clothes. There were several complete changes of clothes for each of them. They all needed to be washed since they had been immersed in salt water, and were starting to smell. Jackie was glad to find the extra clothes, but reminded Darrell they needed to conserve water. She suggested that they fill the sink partly with water and soap, and wash all the clothes at once, drain the sink, then rinse all of them, and hang them to dry. She rummaged through the box, and found a clothesline and a bunch of clothespins. Taking them out, she looked around for the eye hooks to string the line up, and found them between the hut and a nearby palm tree. Between the tropical sun and the breeze, the clothes would be dry in no time. Darrell offered to help, so Jackie plugged the sink and washed their underwear first, and Darrell hung them up to await the rinse cycle. Jackie was busy washing their shirts and pants, and Darrell added them to the line when she was done. Jackie drained the sink, and refilled it with fresh water. Darrell took all the underwear down, and Jackie rinsed all the soap out of them, and wrung as much water out as she could. She handed the whole pile back to Darrell, who hung them up again, and brought her the heavier clothes. Jackie filled the solar shower, and hung it outside to get warm. When she finished the heavier clothes, Darrell hung those up as well. By now the shower water was warm enough for both of them to take a shower.

“Darrell, I don’t know how to tell you this, but in order to save water, we have to shower together, and you need to take a “Navy” shower.”

“What’s a Navy shower?”

“You get wet, turn off the water, lather up, turn the water back on and rinse. Total process takes less than 5 minutes, and only uses a couple of gallons of water. If you take a “Navy” shower with a friend, it uses even less water, besides it’s more fun!”

“I’m game if you are!”

Darrell walked outside and took down the Solar Shower, and hung it in the Shower enclosure, then they both stripped and hopped in the shower together. When they were finished, Darrell said “I didn’t know taking a shower was so much fun!”

Jackie said, “You think that’s fun - guess what’s next?” Needless to say they didn’t get a lot

done that day!

Later that afternoon, they washed the clothes they were wearing, and walked around in the buff. Jackie took one look at Darrell and said “You better stay out of the sun like that, or you might get a very interesting sunburn that would be most embarrassing to explain.” She took pity on Darrell and walked outside to pick up their now dry clothes. They put their clothes back on, but Jackie skipped her bra, making it very hard for Darrell to concentrate on anything else. Darrell walked over to her, gave her a big hug and whispered something in her ear. “Already - you horny old goat! I guess I should walk around braless more often.” Even though she was almost 50, Jackie had managed to maintain her figure, and looked 20 years younger than her age. They took care of that problem, then Darrell fixed dinner for them. It was a Veggie Omelet, but Jackie thought it was delicious. She didn’t know Darrell knew how to cook! They sat in the screen gazebo and watched the sun set behind them.

Later that evening, they lay in the hammock, and Darrell said “Jackie, how can I make up for all those years?”

“You’re doing a pretty good job right now - just keep it up!”

“Jackie, either that was the worst pun I’d ever heard, or you’re turning into a Brazen Hussy!”

“Dear, this is our second Honeymoon! Remember what we did on our first one?”

“I don’t remember leaving the bridal suite for at least 3-4 days, but I’m much older now, and I didn’t bring any Viagra!”

“Don’t worry, I don’t think I’d be able to do that again either. But I like holding you like this, and talking like we used to.”

“Yeah, me too! So when we get home, what do you want to do?”

“If you mean another vacation, I was thinking Hawaii, but I don’t think I want to see another tropical island for a while. How about an Alaskan Cruise?”

“That would be neat, I could see a lot of the wildlife I’ve only seen pictures of. OK if I buy a new camera? There was this Cannon 35mm film camera I was looking at.”

“I’ve got no problems with you spending money on us and things we want, as long as the bills are paid.”

“Jackie, I don’t know how to tell you this, but I’ve been saving money for years in case you carried out that divorce you were threatening. I have over \$1 million in the bank!”

“Darrell, that’s great - we could pay cash for the trip, I can get a new car, you can get your camera outfit and all the film you want to shoot, and I know you were looking at a new computer. Have you ever thought of going into business for yourself. You were telling me that the programs you wrote made your company millions. If you were an Independent Contractor, you could keep more of that money, and we’d have enough money to live comfortably, and you could still donate to worthy causes.”

“You know, I’ve talked about it and thought about it for years. I always thought that working for a company gave you security, but last week they fired Bob just because he was getting close to retirement, and they didn’t want to pay his pension. If I worked as an Independent Contractor, I could earn 3-5 times what I’m earning now, and best of all, I could work from home, or I could get a laptop and work over the internet if we wanted to travel! I could buy a top of the line PC, get a DSL connection, and even get a laptop with a docking port, and a LAN setup so you could use it too to surf the internet, or write, or whatever you want to do! I’m so glad that we’re here and talking about this right now. You know what, if I didn’t have that money in the bank, I wouldn’t feel secure enough to try it! This is really amazing how things are working out.”

Chapter 8

The next morning, Jackie asked Darrell what they were going to eat if they ran out of eggs.

“Jackie, there’s a whole lagoon full of fish.”

“I thought you were a Vegetarian?”

“I still am sort of - I still can’t bring myself to eat red meat.”

“OK, I guess this means we shouldn’t have a “Survival Adventure” in the middle of a Caribou herd?”

“Don’t even joke about another adventure - once per lifetime is enough for me. I just hope they find us before the food and water run out.”

“Ok, how’d you like barbequed fish for dinner this evening?”

“Great - and believe it or not, I have a great marinade for fish.”

“Darrell, I don’t understand, you’ve been a Vegetarian for as long as I knew you.”

“Yeah, but my Dad was a real good cook, and I didn’t become a Vegetarian until after I went to Berkeley. I’ve eaten my share of red meat, and my Dad knew how to cook it!”

“OK, I’ll catch it and clean it, you cook it. How long before cooking should it marinade?”

“I’d like an hour in the marinade. Let’s say about an hour and a half before dinner time to give you time to catch and clean it.”

Jackie walked up to Darrell and gave him a big hug and a kiss. The feel of her body next to his made him wish he were a younger man, or had packed the Viagra!

“OK, let’s see, dinner at 5 spear fishing at 3:30 - so what do you want to do for the rest of the day?”

Darrell’s hard insistent kiss and passionate grope told Jackie what was on his mind. She may have looked 30- but she was pushing 50, and he was tiring her out!

“Easy boy - I don’t know if I can handle much more of that!”

“Any other ideas about what to do on a deserted tropical island with nothing to do, and a huge

honeymoon hut?”

“OK Darrell, but I’m not making any promises.”

Later that afternoon, she figured a cold shower might cool him off, but failed to take into account the effect cold water has on a woman’s body. Darrell picked up right where he left off, and they were still in the shower! When they stopped. Jackie said “The next time I want you to take a cold shower, remind me to make sure you take it alone!”

Darrell laughed and confessed that he was too pooped to pop.

“About time! If we kept this up, dinner would become breakfast, and I’d die from exhaustion.”

“OK Dear, as soon as you can manage to get some clothes on you and catch your breath, you can go catch dinner. You kill it and I’ll grill it - to quote Ted Nugent!”

“Darrell, I thought the Vegetarians couldn’t stand him?”

“We can’t, but that doesn’t mean we didn’t know about the famous quotation.”

“Don’t worry dear, I won’t rat you out to PETA.”

Darrell laughed a good long belly laugh. It had been a long time since Jackie heard him laugh like that, and soon she was laughing too, when she envisioned PETA drumming him out of the corps. She finally got dressed, and carrying her improvised Hawaiian Sling, walked to the water’s edge. As she waded out past her waist, the fish were even more numerous and aggressive. She figured they were used to being fed by the vacationers. Finally she got out into deeper water, and had to use her swim goggles to see underwater. There in the deep water was a huge reef fish, so she pulled the rubber tube taut, and taking a couple of deep breaths, dove down to catch dinner. The fish didn’t even move until it was too late, and the blade impaled the fish right through the gills. She swam toward the surface, keeping the blade pointed up so the fish couldn’t wriggle off even though it was mortally wounded. She thought about the blood in the water, and hoped the opening of the reef was too shallow for sharks. As she surfaced, she stroked for the shore holding the skewered fish aloft. Finally she was back in shallow water, and walked back to shore. When she was out of the water, she took the blade out of the deceased fish and carried it by the tail to a cleaning table she had seen earlier, but didn’t mention to Darrell since she was sure he’d think it was gross. There was a large bucket of water waiting for her, and using her SAK, she quickly cleaned the fish, and cut it into 2 fillets. She carried the fillets over to Darrell, who had the marinade ready, and put the fish in it. Jackie went back over to clean up her mess and dispose of the fish entrails. She carried them to the water, and dumped the bucket in. She guessed the fish weren’t picky eaters as long as it wasn’t a relative of theirs. Later, Darrell grilled the fish on the barbeque along with a couple of fresh ears of corn. Jackie was amazed at how good the fish was, and she asked him for the recipe for

the marinade.

“I took some fresh fruit and lemon juice, and squeezed the juice and pulp out of them, and added a tablespoon of olive oil and sea salt, that’s it!”

“Darrell, it was very good, and you’re an excellent cook. If you want to cook when we get home, I won’t have any complaints.”

This was music to Darrell’s ears. He’d been a frustrated Gourmet Chef, but being a Vegetarian tends to cramp your style, since it limits the cuisines you can make, because so many are meat-based, and don’t taste the same with Tofu!

They went to bed after dinner, and this time actually went to sleep. Jackie was starting to develop religion, because she was thanking God that he was finally worn out!

Chapter 9

The next day Jackie realized that it had been almost 10 days since the crash, and no one had come looking for them. She hoped someone besides the pilot knew that they were out there, or it could be a long wait. She walked over to Darrell and said “Darrell, it’s been almost 10 days since the crash, and no one has come looking for us, I wonder if anyone except the pilot knows we are here. I think we should start rationing water and food, especially the citrus we have left, and saving everything we can. Even if we use a lemon, orange or lime for a marinade, we need to save and dry the peels from now on, so we can make tea for the vitamin C. If we go too long without vitamin C, we’ll start having major problems, and could develop scurvy or lose our teeth. I hate to say this, but we’re going to have to eat more fish, and less produce, since all the produce we have is in that cooler, and once that’s gone, that’s all until they find us. I need you to come up with a menu you can live with that includes more fish and less produce. We can’t eat a green salad for a meal anymore, and your veggie omelets are great, but they use way too much produce. Can you modify them to use less produce, or come up with something else to make with the eggs that uses less produce? Also we need to save and recycle everything. That means if you wash veggies, make sure you save the water to do something else with instead of just draining it. For instance, you can wash clothes with veggie water, since they’re going to get rinsed with clean water anyway. I just need your help, because I’m afraid I might miss something, and I don’t want to die, especially now that things are going so great between us.”

“Don’t worry, Jackie, we’ll get off this island one way or another. Did I mention that I used to go sailing a lot when I was a teenager? Matter of fact, I got certified in several different sailboats, including intercoastal sail cruisers, since I always wanted to own a huge sail yacht, or at least work on one. If you have a compass and a map showing where we are, and where Australia is, or the nearest populated island, we can convert the raft into a primitive sailboat. It won’t be the Queen Mary, but it will get us there. If we even want to think about this, we need to come up with some water containers to carry water, because it could take us a week to sail to the nearest island, or several weeks to go all the way to Australia.”

Jackie dug through her fanny pack, and sure enough, her map was still there, still dry, and the compass she packed was in there as well. Good thing she brought her orienteering compass instead of her precision lensmatic compass. The lensmatic compass is great for very accurate bearings, but wanting to know if you’re on the right heading when you’re bobbing in the middle of the ocean with no references, a base plate compass is much easier to use. She would have killed for a GPS unit, but rightly figured that the batteries would conk out right when they needed it. She laid the map on the table, oriented the map to North using the compass, and located the exact island they were on by the mark she made and based on bearing and distance from the airport. She looked at the pilot’s compass and airspeed indicator, and had a good idea of his heading and airspeed. “I marked the island we were supposed to go to on the map before we left, so I know where we are, and we’re about 2 hours by air from Australian mainland. He was averaging 80 knots, so including a 10 knot tail wind, his true ground speed was around 90

knots, which means we are between 150 and 200 miles from Australia on a direct path.”

“OK, that means the mainland is about a week or 2 away by sail since we can’t sail into the wind with any sail I can make work on the raft. Best we can hope for is 2/3 into the wind, and we will be sailing fairly slowly that close to the wind. See if you can locate an inhabited island that is closer to our Southeast that is big enough that we won’t miss it - we’ll be navigating by dead reckoning since we won’t know our true speed through the water or our exact course. A deviation of a degree or two over 100 miles means we could miss any island that is smaller than 10 miles across, and not high enough to see from that distance. The nice thing about sailing to Australia is that it’s so big we can’t miss it, but we might land in an uninhabited area, then we’d be not much better off than we are now. After 2 weeks on the open ocean, we probably would need medical care for sunburn and dehydration. I really don’t want to risk it until we’re under 50 gallons of water in the tank.”

“Darrell, I’m amazed, I never knew you could think like that - you seemed so preoccupied with Saving the Planet that I never heard you talk about anything else. You have a good head for details, and you think well on your feet.”

“All it took was a major Reality Check, and all the old stuff my Dad told me came roaring back. See, he was into preparedness, and my Mom was into Shopping! They fought like cats and dogs too, so I just thought our fights were normal. It never really occurred to me we could actually get along and have fun together. If we ever get off this island, I promise to make it up to you. You’re right, working for those SOBs made them rich, and turned me into a Stress Case! No wonder I was so worried about the planet. I was worried about everything but us until you threatened divorce that day. I knew you were serious, and I tried to placate you with a trip, but I hadn’t really changed my ways. I was still a Cheap SOB, and very self-centered. Can you forgive me?”

“Darrell, I already have! I love you now almost more than we were married. I was an idealistic bride, and I thought I could change the few things I didn’t like about you. Now I realize that you had to want to change first, and I think you’ve gotten to that stage. Now all we have to do is get off this island. I agree we should wait until we’re down to about 50 gallons of water before we try anything as dangerous as trying to sail to another island or Australia. We should probably start making provisions for it as soon as possible. Besides, building a sailing craft out of our existing raft will give us something to do when we’re NOT in bed!”

Darrell gave Jackie a great big hug, then broke down and cried on her shoulder. She held him while he got it out, then instead of going inside, they started making plans to convert their raft into a primitive sailboat. Jackie looked through their supplies and the contents of the fanny pack. She found some King Size cotton sheets in the box, and asked Darrell if they would work for sails. Darrell read the tag in the corner, and it said Egyptian Cotton, 300 denier. He told Jackie that meant that it was very good cotton, and would make an excellent sail, but won’t survive high winds - it would rip to shreds.

Jackie said “That’s OK, there are two of them in here, along with pillow cases and other stuff we haven’t used so far.”

Darrell started thinking, and came up with some very interesting ideas.

“That gives us 2 main sails, a couple of sea anchors, and materials to make ropes or to fashion some space inside the pontoons to carry stuff in. All we need now are some plastic containers. I’d like 50 gallons of water with us when we leave, since we could go through a gallon a day each if we sweat too much. I got it, do you have a tarp or something in that kit of yours?”

“Darrell, I forgot all about it - it’s a 10x10 Sportsman’s blanket - that means it is blue tarp material on one side, and reflective Mylar on the other.”

“Jackie, if we made a shelter out of the tarp with the Mylar facing out, it would be cooler - right?”

“Also it would make one heck of a reflector in case anyone is looking for us in a plane. I wish I had brought that dye pack marker with us, I could have trailed that behind the boat, and they might see it from the air.”

“Wouldn’t work sweetie. They’re designed for downed pilots that are staying in one place, or moving slowly. At the rate we were moving, it wouldn’t leave a noticeable wake. but that does give me some ideas. We should hang streamers from the top of the mast to make ourselves more visible during the day. Do I have any bright red or orange colored shirts packed?”

“No but you’ve got that bright Fuchsia colored one that would stick out like a sore thumb.”

“Great - I never liked it anyway - the boss made us wear those colors on Casual Friday!”

“By any chance did your boss have a sexual identity problem?”

“Now that you mentioned it - he did seem a little Swishy at times!”

Darrell started laughing very hard - Jackie was confused until he came up for air and explained the joke. “I just got the joke, everyone in the company called him “Oral Roberts, but I never understood why - he wasn’t a Televangelist - heck he was an Atheist!”

“Darrell, I still don’t get it!”

“Jackie, his name was Sam Roberts - I guess someone found out he was gay and into oral sex, and the name stuck - never to his face of course, but I never got it - I guess it never dawned on me that he was a flaming fag! That explained all the uniform requirements including no facial hair for men, and the only women working for the company made Rosie O’Donnell look

straight. That settles it, when I get back, I'm quitting and starting my own programming company. Maybe I can steal a few of the better programmers from them that are disgusted with his behavior. I bet I can run a company better than he could - I know one thing for sure - I never want to be big enough to need a Personnel or Accounting department."

"Why's that dear?"

"If you're so big that you need a separate department to keep track of your employees, that means you don't spend enough time working with your employees, and you've become a Suit. Accounting departments just tell you what you can't do, and eat up tons of profit with paperwork. All I want is a half-dozen programmers working with me on projects. Heck, they could even be Independent Contractors themselves for all I care, and I can pay them better. All we'd need was a small office with a receptionist, and everyone could work from home most of the time except for scheduled meetings, and there would be damn few of them. I'm NOT going to schedule a meeting to find out why no one likes attending meetings!"

"Darrell, that's nice but we need to concentrate on survival right now - we'll have plenty of time to talk about your dream company. It sounds like a great idea. Anyway, how about if you scout around the center of the island to look for building materials for the raft/sailboat, while I look through our stuff to see what we can use to make sails and stuff. Also, we're going to need ropes and stuff to secure the mast and the boom, unless you want to make a square rigger, but they don't run well into the wind."

"Jackie, how did you know that?"

"I watched a lot of Pirate movies, and noticed the big ships with the square sails were either sailing away from the wind, or across it. It also noticed the little cutters with all those small triangular sails up front could sail a lot closer to the direction of the wind."

"You're exactly right, those little triangular sails are called Jibs, and that's exactly what they are for. They go in front of the main mast and allow the ship to sail closer to the wind by acting as miniature wings. Unless we can extend a pole out the front of the raft, we're limited to either a lateen rig, or a simple sloop rig without the jib. The lateen is easier to rig, but requires more materials. I'm tempted to make a simple mono-sail setup fixed to the mast and just try that since I don't have pulleys to hoist a sail."

Darrell went to the interior of the island to look for suitable materials. Jackie dumped the contents of her fanny pack onto the table, and noticed she had a lot of 20-pound monofilament fishing line. Now if she only had a needle she could thread through it - Doh! All she had to do was straighten out a fishhook, and cut the barbs off, and voila - instant sewing needle. With that problem solved, she started thinking about how to transport stuff, and erect a shelter over the center area. She had her gill net, and several sets of sheets, evidently they thought you would mess a bunch of them up! She wondered if the gill net would be strong enough to lash across

both pontoons. About an hour later, Darrell was walking back all excited.

“Guess what Jackie, there’s several huge hardwood trees in the center of the island, and another stand of what I think is bamboo, but it looks different from the other stuff. I’m not sure what it is, can you come and take a look?”

“Sure Darrell, just show me where it is.”

They walked almost a mile to the interior of the island, and Jackie was amazed at all the flora and fauna. There were coconut palms all over the place, and several species of vines and other plants that might be useful. She didn’t want to damage them right now, because they had enough food and water for several months before they had to start thinking about getting off the island. When they got to the center of the island, sure enough there were several huge hardwoods. Jackie took a good look at them, and found some leaves on the ground. She identified the tree by its leaves, even though she had only seen them in a book.

“Darrell, I think these are Koa trees, they’re common as mud in Polynesia, but I didn’t know they had made it this far east. They’re as hard as mahogany, and fairly fast growing. This big one would easily make another main section if you want to build a catamaran instead of an outrigger setup. If we did, we’d need to check out the rest of the reef and see if there are any bigger openings than the one we came through, since we couldn’t make a useable catamaran style boat that was less than 6 feet wide. You said there was some other stuff you wanted to show me?”

“Yeah, over here - it’s the weirdest thing; they look like bamboo, but not really.”

They walked over to the plant, and Jackie took a closer look at it, finally she chopped a stem off and examined the cut.

“Darrell - you’re not going to believe this one - that’s a mature Rattan plant. There is NO way this plant is native to anywhere within 1000 miles of here - someone deliberately planted this plant here, or brought it over by accident. Anyway, it’s like 10 times stronger than bamboo - see all these fibers running through it like a telephone wire bundle? Bamboo and Rattan are members of the same plant family, but due to the fibers, Rattan is much stronger. Some of these pieces could carry as much weight as that koa tree you found, but it doesn’t float too well! Anyway, you found the makings of a primitive Polynesian catamaran.”

“How so, sweetie?”

“If we chop that big koa tree down, cut it in half, it gives us 2 15-foot sections. We need to hollow them out to make them float easier, like a dugout canoe, and then we lash the biggest pieces of the Rattan across them to form a frame for a center section. We can either make thin planks, which would take forever, or fashion a net out of the gill net and the extra sheets I

found. I found about 100 yards of 20-pound monofilament I can use to sew up the sheets to make a sail, and I have some other stuff too including snare wire and bailing wire to fasten stuff together.”

Satisfied that if they had to get off the island, they could, they walked back to the hut just in time for dinner. Jackie picked up her spear and her goggles, and said, “I’ll be back in 15-20 minutes with dinner dear - why don’t you get whatever you need started.”

20 minutes later, she came back with a huge fish. It was way too much for them for dinner, so Darrell suggested they stick the rest in the cooler, and use it for breakfast. He had a recipe that combined fish and eggs into a tasty omelet. He needed to see if they had the ingredients first. Jackie cleaned and filleted the fish while Darrell scrounged around in the cooler and the boxes. He found what he needed for breakfast, and decided to grill the fish with some leftover lemon juice from the previous night’s dinner. Remembering what Jackie told him, he saved the remains of the lemon to dry the peel for lemon tea later. After dinner, they laid in the hammock and snuggled until they fell asleep.

Chapter 10

The next morning, Darrell had a brainstorm, and as soon as Jackie was awake, he told her his idea. “Jackie, if we can find a piece of rattan long enough and big enough, we have enough sailcloth to make a full sloop rig, The boat would behave like a true catamaran, and be able to sail into the wind 2/3 as fast as across it.”

“How are you going to do this? Are you feeling OK?”

“Jackie, we have all that bailing wire and snare wire. If it’s strong enough, we can run a jib stay out the front of the boat and run a line from the jib stay to the mast, and use it not only to support the mast, which we are going to need anyway, but as the carrying line for a jib sheet. You said we had enough material for 2 main sails. How about making 1 main and a jib, and cutting our travel time by 30-50%! That would cut down on the food and water we need to bring. That reminds me, do you know how to dry fish - we need to bring something to eat for the trip.”

“I remember reading about how the Alaskans did it with salmon; I’m sure the technique is the same.”

“OK, because we need a drying rack or something to dry fish on, and this is going to take a while. Also, we need to get started next week on building the boat, since it will take us at least a month. That will give us something to do, and we’ll be in better shape if we need to leave by having the boat built already, then being under time pressure with our water running out trying to build it in a hurry before we ran out of water.”

“Darrell, what got into you - you changed!”

“Not really, just a part of me that has been dormant for decades is starting to reassert itself. When I made the conscious decision to survive no matter what, my entire focus shifted. I’m not worried about the planet. I’m not going to cry over cutting down those trees we need to build a boat, and I’m definitely not going to lose any sleep over killing and grilling or drying those fish.”

“Great Dear - Why couldn’t you have done this years ago?”

“Took a big shock to re-boot my system.”

“Spoken like a true Programmer.”

“Jackie, I just remembered something, we need to scavenge everything off that old raft we can, so before we do that, we need to explore this lagoon, and figure out how wide the widest usable

opening is, because this boat won't be as flexible as our raft, and will have to fit comfortably through the reef opening. Since I can't swim, you're going to have to measure the opening."

"OK, Darrell, but you're going to learn how to swim before we leave. This lagoon is nice and calm, and the fish are friendly."

"Last time I tried swimming I sank like a rock!"

"Were you in fresh water or salt water?"

"I was in the pool - so it was fresh."

"Great news, Salt water is much denser than fresh - you'll float like a cork!"

"Great, when do we start?"

"You brought swim trunks, right?"

"Duh!"

OK, go get changed, and meet me at the edge of the water. Wear a shirt so you don't get sunburnt. We're going to learn to float."

15 minutes later, Darrell arrived at the water's edge, wearing the dorkiest pair of swim trunks Jackie had ever seen. She thought that it might have been designed by a blind man. It was Florescent Yellow with pink flowers, and looked 3 sizes too big. Jackie tried very hard not to laugh her head off, and showed up in a skimpy bikini. Darrell gave a low wolf-whistle, and Jackie said "Maybe if you're a real good student!" Man talk about motivational techniques. He thought that if Jackie asked him to swim to Australia, he could just about manage. They walked out to waist deep water, and Darrell started getting nervous. Sensing Darrell's insecurity, she held his hand as they walked into deeper and deeper water. When he was chest deep, she told Darrell "OK, you're deep enough to float on your back, but still touch down just by putting your feet down. Lean back, pick up your feet, I'm right here to hold you."

Darrell floated in Jackie's arms for 15 minutes, then Jackie slowly lowered her arms, and Darrell realized he was floating all by himself! He stayed right there, he was so comfortable in that weightless condition that he could have taken a nap. 15 minutes later, Jackie woke him up "Darrell, Nap time's over. Are you ready for the next step?"

"Depends"

I'm going to teach you to tread water. You can't float on your back in rough water, like the swells outside the lagoon, because the swell action will keep messing up your balance. OK, put

your feet down, and do what I do.”

Jackie started sculling her arms back and forth, then she started slowly flutter kicking. Darrell imitated her, and was soon treading water. Treading like this was tiring, so she only let him do it for 5 minutes. “Getting tired Darrell?”

“You better believe it - I hope swimming is easier than this.”

“OK, I’m going to show you the Survival Sidestroke. It’s a sidestroke with a floating pause. You can swim over a mile using this stroke in warm water if you are in good shape, well hydrated, and the water temperature is over 75 degrees as it is here. Just watch me.”

Jackie laid on her right side since she was right handed, reached out with her right hand as far above her head as she could, cupped her hand, and drew it down to her right breast in one motion. Between the end of pulling with her right arm and pulling with her left hand, she scissor kicked with her legs, paused a second, and cupping her left hand, reached over and in front of her head, putting it in the water, and pulling down right in front of her right breast down to her ribcage. As her left hand came out of the water, she extended her right arm, repeating the sequence. After watching a few strokes, Darrell got brave, laid on his right side, and imitated her. His scissors kick wasn’t as efficient as hers was, but he was moving forward, and not swallowing seawater. They swam together, and then Jackie led Darrell to shallow water, so he could stand up if he wanted to since she noticed he was tiring. About 10 minutes later, Darrell had swum maybe 100 yards, and Jackie decided to call it quits. She swam up to Darrell, and was about to give him a big kiss and a hug when he reached over and untied her bikini. Jackie was in the mood too, and didn’t fight it. They made slow passionate love in the lagoon, then they staggered back into the hut and collapsed.

Chapter 11

The next morning, after breakfast, Jackie suggested they paddle around the lagoon, and check out the other side to see if there were any bigger openings. Darrell agreed, and they floated the raft, picked up their paddles, and silently stroked to the edge of the reef, then turned to the right, and followed the edge of the reef. There were several openings, but all were smaller than the one they originally entered. Finally, when they had just about circled the entire reef, there was a huge opening about 100 yards away from the other one. It was at least 20 feet wide, and over 3 feet deep at its shallowest point. Jackie asked Darrell what the draft of their new catamaran would be. He told her that it shouldn't be more than a foot deep, maybe 2 feet max fully loaded. With that bit of knowledge, they could now salvage everything they could use off the old raft to build the new one. After they beached the raft, Jackie started dismantling it. First thing she did was to carefully untie all the lashing to recover the Paracord. She laid them on the beach to dry, then stacked the pieces of bamboo. The piece of palm tree trunk that had been their main section was pretty waterlogged, so she decided to let them dry on the beach before she used the wood to build a fire to hollow out the koa wood pontoon sections.

Meanwhile, Darrell was planning on how to build their primitive sailing catamaran. He knew the easiest job would be to cut down all the rattan, and the hardest one would be to cut down the koa tree. It was a huge tree, over 30 feet tall, and they really needed a double-bit axe to chop it down, or a good chainsaw, but they were fresh out of both. Darrell was afraid that chopping down the tree would be a huge task with just a Kukhri. He had found a piece of paper and a pencil, and was busy sketching out the design when Jackie walked up the beach with a huge ball of now dry Paracord in her hands. "Darrell, can you help me roll this back up?"

Darrell set the drawing down and asked Jackie what she wanted to do.

"Just hold your hands up about 2 feet apart."

Darrell did just that, and Jackie started unrolling the ball of Paracord, and looped it around Darrell's hands, making about a 2-foot long loop of cord. When she was finished, she took one end and wrapped it around the loops several times, and tied an overhand knot in the end. She retrieved the cord, and saw Darrell's drawing on the table.

"Darrell, you're quite the artist - I never knew. It looks like an excellent design, but I can tell you right now, I don't have enough Paracord to lash that all together."

"I know, I was planning on using the Bailing wire for the guys for the mast, and whatever we had left over for lashings. That still leaves your roll of snare wire. While not as strong as the bailing wire, we can use it for lighter stuff like attaching the awning over the center of the catamaran so we don't look like lobsters when we get to wherever we're going."

“Smart idea sweetie. I wouldn’t look forward to being baked like that either. Besides, that would make us use a lot more water than laying in the shade. How are you planning on stringing it up?”

“Exactly like you said - Stringing it up! Either we’ll use bailing wire, snare wire, or whatever we have available to run a line from the mast to the stern, then guy the corners down to the deck, making a low tent-like cover over the middle. Just make sure I hang it shiny side up, or it really will be an oven, since the light will reflect off the water, and off the reflective side of the tarp right onto us! This won’t be a luxury yacht, and will get really cramped after a few days on the ocean, but it beats swimming!”

“Darrell, did you remember the rudder and the keel?”

“Jackie, I haven’t gotten that far yet, I was going to use a larger branch of koa wood for a rudder, and I’m not sure we need a keel or anything like it, the Hobie Cats don’t use keels, and they track to windward just fine. Just in case, I’ll include another piece of koa wood in the inventory to lash to one of the pontoons as a keel. Anything else I’ve missed.”

“Not to be indelicate, but there’s no bathroom on this tub.”

“Sorry Jackie, but if you need to go, you squat and do it over the side!”

“Remind me to save several rolls of toilet paper!”

“I’m still not 100% sure about this center section. Hobie Cats have heavy-duty canvas and nylon fabric nets strung between the pontoons. We’re using what sheets we have left, and your gill net. I wouldn’t stand up on it if I were you! You might just fall through!”

“Maybe we can supplement the netting with native materials, or maybe the hammock! That Hammock can handle our full weight and then some, and it’s easily large enough to span the distance! It just means we’ll have to sleep on something else for a couple of nights after we get the boat built.”

“Jackie, you amaze me sometimes.”

“Yeah, well sometimes I amaze myself!”

“That hammock would be perfect, and it would be worth sleeping on the floor a couple of nights to use it - if you stretched the hammock between the pontoons, and really secured it well, all we’d need over it would be the gill net to reduce the size of the holes, and a couple of sheets to cover it. That combination should be as strong and durable as the canvas/nylon trampolines that Hobie uses in their catamarans. We’ll need to store all our gear inside the dugout sections of the pontoons, so I hope you have a lot of trash bags, and something to secure them inside the

pontoon in case the weather gets rough. Also, anything on your person like the compass or your monocular needs to be attached to you with a lanyard to prevent it going overboard, because we can't turn around and pick it up. Better yet, you could carry them around your neck and under your blouse on a lanyard. That should be interesting!"

"Or if you'd prefer, I could go topless, after all, we are in Polynesia!"

"Much as I'd love that, there are at least 2 reasons that wouldn't be a good idea: I couldn't concentrate, and I'd hate for you to get a major sunburn on your beautiful breasts!"

"Flatterer! You say the nicest things!"

"Jackie, I was serious, you might be over 40, but you have the body of a 30-year old! Why do you think I act like such a "horny old goat" as you like to tease me?"

"Gee, I just thought it was because you loved me!"

"Of course Jackie, but men are visual animals, and seeing your naked or partially naked body does stuff to me, and the fact that I happen to be crazy in love with you makes it even easier!"

"OK, I guess that if I don't want to fool around I should dress like a nun?"

"I don't know Jackie - That could be Habit Forming!"

"Darrell - that was the worst pun I've heard in weeks, I don't know whether to kiss or slap you, so I guess I'll kiss you!"

When they finished smooching, Jackie handed Darrell the Kukhri and a pair of gloves, and told him how to chop down the tree. Thinking quickly, she grabbed a foot-long piece of Paracord, threaded it through the lanyard hole of the LTC Kukhri and made a quick lanyard so if the Kukhri slipped out of his grasp, it wouldn't go flying and injure him.

"Darrell, it's not like those palm trees, Koa is a fairly hard wood, somewhere between pine and oak. It's going to take a lot of time to chop it down, so we better get started. I'll start cutting down that Rattan plant since we're going to use most of the stalks anyway. It will re-grow next year, and be back up to full size within 5-10 years. Unfortunately, the Koa tree will take 20-30 years to reach that size again. Good news is that if it sends out shoots from the trunk, it will re-grow rapidly from the old trunk, and drop seed pods around it within 5 years so there will be a bunch of Koa trees where that one giant stood."

Jackie took out her Gerber Exchange-a-blade with the regular blade still attached, and walked with Darrell into the center of the island where the trees were. She put her gloves on as well, since the grassy leaves of the rattan plant could cut her easily. She was wearing a long shirt and

pants as an extra precaution. Darrell walked over to the Koa tree, and patted the trunk. "Sorry old-timer, but I need to cut you down so we can get off this island and live." Darrell cleared the debris from around the trunk since Jackie told him that the tree could fall in an unpredictable direction since they didn't have the right tools to properly chop it down, and he might need his track shoes to get as far away from the tree as possible when it started falling. Darrell asked Jackie "Should I stop when I get to the hut - or should I start swimming?"

"Smarty - all you need to do is get twice the height of the tree away from the trunk. The hut should be far enough!"

As Jackie started sawing through the base of the rattan plant, she heard the ringing of the Kukhri as Darrell chopped steadily at the base of the Koa tree. By the time she called it quits later that afternoon, Darrell had made some progress, and was 1/3 the way through the trunk, and had a nice wedge forming. Despite the gloves, Darrell's hands looked like he had been through a bare-knuckle brawl, they were raw and bleeding.

Jackie gave Darrell a hug and said "Sorry dear, I wish there were some other way to do this, but I can fix your hands. You won't like the first treatment, but the best thing for those hands is to soak them in salt water, then apply antibiotic ointment and bandages."

"Ok, Jackie, do what you have to do."

Jackie walked Darrell into chest deep water, and told him to immerse his hands, she warned him that this would sting - A Lot! Darrell stuck his hands under the water, and she had underestimated the degree of pain - It hurt like Heck! 10 minutes later, his hands stopped hurting, and he told Jackie, who told him to follow her to the hut and she would bandage his wounds. She didn't need the alcohol preps, so she put some Neosporin on the wounds, and covered the blisters with a panty shield - Darrell turned red when he saw the package, then Jackie told him that they were multi-purpose, so she packed them instead of all the gauze bandages. Then she wrapped it with a couple of turns of roller bandage, not wasting any since it was the only roll she had, then taped it securely. Jackie gave Darrell a couple of Advil and told him to go lay down, she'd make dinner.

Chapter 12

Jackie made dinner after she caught it, and Darrell slept until dinner. Jackie told Darrell they were taking the next day off since his hand needed to heal, and the tree wasn't going anywhere. They spent the rest of the evening holding each other.

The next morning they were lazing around the hut when they heard a strange noise. Jackie grabbed her monocular and her signal mirror, and asked Darrell to light a signal fire. When she reached the waters edge, she scanned for the sound since sounds traveled far across water. When she thought she knew where the sound was coming from, she looked through her monocular, but the field of view was small, so she had to continually scan. Finally, she saw a small motorboat with an elderly gentleman in it. She took out her mirror, and started flashing it at him, and Darrell started a signal fire on the shore using the green palm fronds. She kept watching through the monocular as he got closer and closer. Finally he turned for the big opening, and headed in. Jackie kept flashing him, and finally he waved back.

“Darrell, we're saved!”

“Are you sure he's not a pirate or something?”

“Darrell, there's only one of them and he's an older guy - I highly doubt he could take me on, much less threaten you!”

“What if he has a gun?”

Jackie hadn't considered that point. But she had to trust that he was OK, or else they were stuck on the island, dead or alive. The old man drove the boat right toward them, and threw her a line.

“What are you doing here - you should have been off the island a week ago!”

“Hi, my name is Jackie, and that's my husband Darrell. I hate to tell you this, but your pilot crashed between the islands, and went down with the plane. We were closer to the other island over there, so we swam to it, not realizing that it was the wrong island. We figured out that your pilot must have missed the island on his approach, and instead of turning around and trying again, he tried to set down in the choppy water between the islands, and flipped the aircraft. It broke up on landing. Darrell and I were lucky to get out with our lives. We build a raft and rowed over to this island. We had just about given up hope that you'd come for us and were building a sailboat when you showed up.”

“Jackie, Darrell, my name is Ben, and I lease this island from the government. I'm sorry about what happened to you, and I am willing to make amends. Right now, I need to make sure

you're OK, and get you back to the mainland. Since this motorboat doesn't have the range, I can take you to my island, and I can radio another float plane to pick you up. I promise this time it will be a reputable plane and pilot. I don't want to have to face a lawsuit over this, or lose my lease, which the government would do in a heartbeat if they heard about this incident. Luckily you seem not the worse for the wear, so if we can get you packed and loaded aboard the boat, we can be at that other island by nightfall."

Jackie and Darrell walked back to the hut and packed like crazy. Since they didn't need to ration food any more, they ate their fill and drank all the water they wanted. Jackie filled every water container she had just in case, and packed a bag full of citrus fruits. She quickly re-sharpened the Kukhri and put it back in its sheath. She checked the contents of her fanny pack, and Darrell repacked the duffle bag. When they were finished, the Old Man was still waiting for them. He helped them aboard, and noticing Jackie's huge knife commented "Didn't I see something like that on "Crocodile Dundee"? "

"Ben, that was a Bowie knife, this is a Kukhri. But you're right - the famous line from Crocodile Dundee II would fit - "That's not a knife - This is a Knife!"

They both got a good laugh, then Ben spun the boat around and headed out to the opening in the lagoon. Once he was in the open water, he told them to find good seats, took out his compass, took a good bearing, and shoved the throttle to the stops. The boat accelerated from an idle to 40 knots rapidly. Once it reached full speed, it planed out and the ride smoothed noticeably. Jackie looked around and saw the gas gauge was about $\frac{3}{4}$ full, and she hoped that was enough to get them to the nearest populated island. She figured he filled up in the morning, and burned off $\frac{1}{4}$ tank getting to the island, so $\frac{3}{4}$ of a tank should be plenty. There was a marine compass mounted on gimbals next to the wheel, and Ben looked at it periodically, and corrected their course if they drifted off. Right before the sun set, they spotted an island in the distance. At the rate it was growing in their view, it must have been huge. An hour later, Ben slowed to navigate through the coral heads, and 10 minutes later, they were on the beach. Darrell felt like kissing the ground, but didn't like the taste of sand. Ben got out of the boat, and told Jackie they were going to his house. It was the largest most elegant house on the beach. Jackie and Darrell followed him inside, and then he walked over to where a US Government Surplus WWII radio stood. He cranked the generator for a few minutes, tuned into a certain frequency and said, "This is Ben Jones calling Australia Air Charter."

A couple of minutes later, a voice came over the speakers "This is Australia Air Charter, go ahead."

"I have two passengers from my house to the mainland, can you pick them up tomorrow, and bill me?"

"Sure, we have an Amphibian coming out that way tomorrow anyway. Tell them to be at the lagoon at 9:00 am sharp."

”OK, Thanks, Ben out.”

OK, that takes care of that. One other thing, I wanted to refund the entire cost of the trip. I’ll pay for your transportation back home, and I’ll even book a pair of first Class tickets on the next available flight from Quantas back to San Francisco International, free. All I ask is you don’t sue me and don’t tell the authorities what happened. I’ll square things with the pilot’s family. I’m not sure he had one anyway.”

Jackie spoke up, “Ben we chopped down the palm trees on the first island to make a raft, and we chopped down the Rattan and the big Koa tree on the other island.”

“Don’t worry about that - every winter, the smaller island you were first on gets inundated by storm waves, and nothing is left. That Koa tree was planted by some honeymooners from another island, and the Rattan came there by the same way. They’re not native - so I don’t worry about it.”

Darrell spoke up, “Ben - the koa tree is a hazard because I only chopped partly through it before my hands blistered and bled.”

“Thanks for telling me Darrell, I’ll bring a chainsaw with me next time. The wood from that tree is valuable, and I can sell it to the villagers who carve stuff out of it and sell it to the tourists.”

Darrell just realized that Ben wasn’t going to lose much money on this deal, that the Koa wood would bring him thousands of dollars on the open market.

Darrell thought Ben was a piece of work, but didn’t say anything - he wasn’t too worried about the pilot, or the damage to the islands, all he was worried about was if they would sue or rat him out to the government. He had half a mind to, but wanted to be safely in California before he did anything. Ben fed them a nice dinner, then offered them the guest room. When they went to bed, Jackie wanted to talk, but Darrell whispered in her ear “The walls have ears” meaning the place could be bugged, and not to talk. He also made a pantomime of a movie camera, so they didn’t get undressed either just in case.

They woke up around 8:00 the next morning, and Ben had a simple breakfast ready for them. “I trust you slept well?”

“Like a log!”

They ate their breakfast in quiet, and Ben handed them a check for the total amount of their trip. Darrell decided to cash it at the first bank they came to in Australia. He didn’t trust Ben as far as he could throw him. Ben then handed them a receipt good for 2 first-class tickets to San Francisco from Quantas Airlines. Darrell thanked Ben, but didn’t go any further.

Ben asked him point blank if he were going to sue.

Darrell answered just as bluntly. “Not as long as the check is good, and the tickets are legit.”

“The check is drawn against the Bank of Australia. There’s a branch at the airport that can convert that to a Cashier’s Check if you want. You can call the airline to confirm the tickets. They’re paid in full. I included \$5,000 extra to cover any lost luggage. I hope that was satisfactory.”

Jackie stepped between the two men. “I’m sure that would be satisfactory Ben - thank you for your hospitality, and like Darrell said, as long as the check and the tickets are good, you won’t hear anything from us again.” Just then, they heard the noise of a plane approaching.

“We need to hurry and catch that plane - Thanks Ben.” and they were out the door.

They flew in silence to Australia, where Darrell almost fainted when the cashier had a cashier’s check waiting for them at the branch. Ben must have called ahead. Darrell noticed the Cashier’s check was payable in US Dollars. Instead of taking the check he asked the teller if they could wire transfer the funds to his US bank. Luckily he had all the routing numbers and everything memorized. Two minutes the entire 20 thousand dollars was wire transferred. They didn’t charge him a fee either - Darrell figured Ben had foreseen his desire to get the money into his bank instead of holding onto a check. Next they walked to the Qantas ticket window, and presented the receipt, and were given two first class tickets to San Francisco. The flight was scheduled to leave in half an hour. They both used the restroom, and pre-boarded the aircraft. Since they were flying first class, they got all the amenities including headphones, so they passed the flight in relative comfort, holding hands all the way. Halfway through Jackie turned to Darrell and motioned for him to take his headphones off.

“Darrell, I think we should count our blessings, and not give Ben any problems. Besides, if it weren’t for the accident and our survival adventure, we’d be spending a lot more money on attorney fees in divorce court.”

“I’m sorry Jackie, I guess I can still be a cheapskate every now and then.”

“That’s what I’m afraid of, we’ll get back to California and you’ll go back to your old habits, and all this would have been wasted.”

“Don’t even worry about it, I’ve decided to quit the company and start my own company. Besides we have that Alaskan Cruise to go on! When we get home, I’m canceling all my subscriptions and memberships - those whiners and hucksters aren’t going to get another penny from me. I’ll still donate to worthy causes, but that will be on a case-by-case basis, and not as much as I used to. Jackie - I’m a changed man - The reason I was a cheapskate was I wanted to donate as much as possible in hopes of saving the planet. Now I know the planet will do just

fine without our help.” Jackie gave Darrell as good of a hug as possible in the cramped plane. They went back to sleep, and when they woke up, the Stewardess served breakfast, and told them they were an hour out of San Francisco. When they landed at San Fran International, Darrell was so overcome he wanted to kiss the ground - he was home!

Chapter 13

When they finally cleared Customs and were in the main concourse, Darrell turned and gave Jackie a big kiss and a hug.

“What was that for?”

“Just because I love you! Let’s take a cab home - we don’t have the keys to your car anyway unless you have a set in your fanny pack.”

Jackie admitted she overlooked that little point. She told Darrell they would need new driver’s licenses and credit cards, since all their ID was at the bottom of the South Pacific. Luckily she had a set of their essential papers in a fireproof lockbox in the house, and another in the bank’s safe deposit. When they got home, Darrell was wondering how they were going to get in when Jackie lifted their secret key from it’s hiding place, and unlocked the front door. After giving Jackie another big hug, Darrell got on the computer and cancelled all his memberships and requested refunds for un-mailed issues. He then contacted the bank, and cancelled all his auto debits that various organizations had got him to sign. He then contacted Personnel at work, and cancelled all his payroll deductions for all the Liberal groups he was sending money to. Now that he had finally cut the financial purse strings to his past, he felt like a new man.

He had almost a month of accumulated vacation, and decided that there was no time like the present to take an Alaskan cruise. He asked Jackie if it were ok to book the cruise for next week. She said that a week would be OK, it would give her enough time to replace all the IDs they had lost, and sleep in her own bed for a couple of days. While he was on the internet booking the cruise, she was calling the DMV and the credit card companies, and requesting new cards on an emergency replacement. Thinking quickly, she told one of the companies that Darrell was booking a cruise over the internet, and had the account number in the computer. She asked if they could use the account since the cards were lost in a plane crash in 500 feet of water in the middle of the South Pacific. The operator said that since the cards weren’t stolen and they were going to re-issue the same account numbers anyway, to go ahead and use it on the internet. Jackie got her name and thanked her. The cards would be overnighted to their house the next day, since they were leaving on a trip.

When he finished booking the trip, Darrell went looking for a new car for Jackie, and found one at a terrific price. It was a Honda CRV that got great gas mileage, was big enough for the both of them, and Jackie would like the fact it was 4wd with a huge hatchback. He called the dealership, and ordered the vehicle over the phone for the internet price. He talked to the sales manager, and asked the car be delivered the next morning to their house, and that he’d be paying cash for the vehicle. The sales manager knocked another \$500 off the price for cash, then offered a whole bunch of extras to get the money back. Darrell agreed to the clear coat and the anti-stain treatment of the interior. He asked the sales manager if they were capable of

accepting a wire transfer of funds, and he put Darrell on hold, and then told him the Finance Manager said they could. He got the dealership's information, and told him the wire transfer would be in their bank tomorrow morning. Also, he asked for a second set of keys. The sales manager assured Darrell it came with 2 sets of keys and a full tank of gas. When he got off the phone with the dealership, he called the bank, spoke to the branch manager who was a long-term friend of his, who arranged the wire transfer, and the deposit from his personal account into their joint account. He was glad to hear that Darrell had decided to move the funds. Darrell said he had a life changing experience, and their marriage was much better. Darrell said he'd be in later that week to sign the paperwork, but he needed the funds transferred by close of business, he'd bought Jackie a new car.

Since they were short of food in the house, Darrell asked Jackie if she wanted to go out to dinner. She readily agreed, and thought to herself "Who are you, and what did you do with my Husband?" She called a cab, and when it arrived, Darrell gave the driver the name of one of the fancier restaurants in town. Jackie was glad she had time to change and shower before the cab arrived, because it had a dress code. When they arrived there, it was early for dinner, so they had a table available. The waiters hustled and bustled around them since they were just about the only customers this early, and they were well-dressed. Darrell ordered the chicken, and Jackie was tempted to order the steak, and motioned Darrell closer, and whispered in his ear. She asked him if it were ok to order the steak, and he nodded. She ordered the prime rib, and then Darrell sprang for a \$30.00 bottle of a good Merlot. To say Jackie was impressed was an understatement. Dinner arrived 30 minutes later, and they ate quietly. When they were finished, they walked arm in arm out the door. The Matre de had called a cab for them, and it arrived right on time, and took them back to their house. When they got inside the house, Jackie laid a lip-lock on Darrell that felt like a lightning bolt, then suggested they shower together and go to bed early. Darrell's smile said it all.

The next morning, Darrell got up quietly without waking Jackie, and made breakfast for both of them including a killer veggie omelet, juice, toast, coffee and cream. Jackie was up by the time Darrell was finished. When she saw that Darrell was dressed, and breakfast was ready, she couldn't resist anymore and asked Darrell "Who are you, and what did you do with my Husband?" Darrell just laughed and they sat down for breakfast. Just as they had finished, there was a knock on the door. Jackie said, "I wonder who that could be?"

Darrell said "I'll get it." Then after the salesman had given him the keys and left, Darrell said, Jackie, I have a little surprise for you. Can you get dressed, and go out front with me?"

Jackie loved surprises, and was dressed in 5 minutes. She walked to the door, and Darrell said, "I bought something for you, I hope you like it." and opened the door. There sitting in the driveway was a brand-new baby blue Honda CRV. Jackie let out a squeal, and hugged Darrell until he was worried she might break his ribs. He tapped Jackie on the shoulder, and waved the keys in front of her. She grabbed them and ran down to the new car. Jackie felt like she was in a dream. She never had a brand new car as long as they were married. When she opened the

driver's side door, the "new car smell" convinced her it was in fact a new car. She closed the door and ran back to Darrell, and proceeded to squeeze the stuffing out of him, until Darrell almost turned blue. She quickly released him, and he took a couple of minutes to catch his breath. "Jackie, remember I promised you a new car? When I finished booking the cruise, I checked a new car discount website, and got this car for \$2,000 dollars below Fleet discount, since it was last year's model. It's totally brand new, and all yours. I deposited the funds from my other account into our joint account, and we have a little over a million dollars left, even after paying for the new car and the trip!"

Jackie felt like tearing off Darrell's clothes right then and there, but figured they could do that later! She ran into the closet, took out their fireproof box and opened it. Inside were certified copies of their birth certificates, copies of their passports, and driver's licenses. She took the entire folder with them, and said they needed to go to the DMV and get new licenses. She grabbed a new book of checks from on top of the dresser on her way out. Darrell told her she could drive, and she drove like a grandmother all the way to the DMV, since they were on a temporary plate with no driver's licenses. When they got there, they must have hit it just right, because there was no wait at the licensing window. Darrell explained their predicament, and the clerk was very accommodating since they had photocopies of their driver's license and birth certificates with them. She took new pictures, and 10 minutes later, they had their new California Driver's licenses. Then they walked over to Registration, and paid a bunch of fees and got new plates for the car. On the way home, Jackie suggested they stop at the Mall since she needed a purse, and he needed a wallet. They went shopping, and bought way more than just the purse and wallet. After they loaded the car, Jackie thought of what else they might need, and then remembered their cruise, and drove into a camera store. Darrell's eyes lit up, and Jackie said they might as well get the camera now, and give him a couple of days to get used to it and make sure it worked, since she didn't want to find out in the middle of the Puget Sound that the camera didn't work. When they walked into the store, Darrell was greeted by an older man, who asked a lot of questions, but didn't say anything until he had spent at least ½ hour talking with Darrell to find out what he wanted to do, where he was going to do it, and if he were just a tyro, or really a dedicated photographer. When he mentioned that he took photography in high school and college, the owner knew which system he would like the most.

"Mr. Hayes, I usually recommend either the Minolta Maxuum or Canon EOS systems for people who are really into cameras, not just a tyro or someone who wants pictures of birthday parties etc. and are willing to spend the time to get to really know how to fully use their cameras. Since you came up with the manual and auto-exposure cameras, I'd suggest the Canon EOS system, since it is as good of a camera in either manual or automatic mode, and you can selectively use any feature you wish. It will take a little longer to really utilize, but you can take good pictures right off the bat in what I call "Idiot mode" that 90 percent of all camera users leave it in."

"What about the Nikon AF's?"

“Good question, my thoughts are you get more bang for the buck with the Minolta or Canon systems unless you need the features of the Nikon cameras for photojournalism or professional photography, but those cameras are 2-3 times the cost of the Minolta or Canon cameras, and the lenses cost more than the camera!”

“I’ve heard a lot of good stuff about the Canon EOS cameras. What do you think of them?”

Here, why don’t I let you hold a few with some lenses attached, and you can tell me. They balance differently, and fit every person differently.”

He handed Darrell a Canon Rebel, but Darrell’s first comment was it felt like a kid’s camera in his hands, and handed it back. Next he handed him an EOS 3, and Darrell held it up to his eye, and it just felt right. but just to be thorough, he picked up the rest of the Canon 35mm SLR cameras, but still the EOS 3 felt best, and he told the owner so.

“Excellent - the EOS 3 is the most flexible one of the bunch. I can get you the body, a 28-70 zoom, and a 75-300 zoom lens - all by Canon, and a Canon 550EX flash that is a little more flash than you’d need right now, but is only \$50 more than the next cheapest unit - and it can do practically anything, and was designed for the EOS 3 and will support all the EOS 3 functions. If I include a pro bag, and a good pistol grip tripod, you’ll be out of here for around \$1500.”

“Sounds like a plan - why don’t you get the kit together while I look around.”

Darrell roamed around the store, and looked at filters. “Excuse me, what size is the lens thread on the lenses, I wanted to buy some screw-on filters.”

“Are you going to use a lot of special filters, or just haze, polarizers, and a couple of colored filters?”

“Just the ones you mentioned - why did you ask?”

“They make a new filter system that screws onto your camera, and allows you to stack filters, but it is really for pro photographers, and the system costs \$100 plus filters.”

Darrell looked at the filters he wanted, and they were 5-10 dollars each. It would only cost him another \$20 to go with screw-ons, versus over \$100 plus filters!

“I think I’ll stick with the screw-on filters for now - what size are these lenses?”

“They are 55mm, so make sure all your filters say 55mm.”

“Thanks” Darrell picked out the filters he needed, and a cleaning kit, as well as 3 spare batteries, and 3 bricks (20 rolls each) of 36 exposure slide film. He preferred the Fujichrome

film for slides. and got 2 bricks of ASA 100 film, and 1 brick of ASA 400 for night and evening shots. He noticed the dealer had a sign for slide developing, and asked him. He said he had a brand-new mini-lab. Darrell asked if he could push process slide film. He said the machine did up to 4 stops of push using Fujichrome. Darrell was impressed, and asked him how much he charged to process and mount slides for 36-exposure rolls. He quoted \$10.00 per roll for 36 exposures mounted and numbered. Darrell told the owner he had a deal, and he'd bring all his slides to him. He gave Darrell a discount card that gave him a free roll developed for every 10 done. Darrell slid it into his brand new wallet next to his driver's license. Then he asked him what his turn-around time was. He said it was 24-hours unless he was working on a rush job. He charged \$20.00 per hour for rush jobs since the pro labs charged \$40.00 and he really wanted the business. The only reason he charged for rush jobs is to keep everyone from wanting 1-hour processing. Darrell thought he was smart.

Before he rang up the order, the owner noticed Darrell didn't have a tripod and asked him if he owned one. Darrell said he used to have a big heavy Bogen tripod, but got tired of hauling it around. The owner showed him a nice aluminum pistol-grip ball mount tripod for \$50, and showed him how to hang the bag around the top of the tripod to make it behave like a bigger one. Darrell thanked him and told him to add it to the list. The last question the owner asked Darrell was if he wanted a cable release for the tripod. When Darrell looked confused, the owner showed him the port on the camera where the electronic cable release went, and said if he were shooting from a tripod, he should use a cable release to keep from disturbing the camera. This was critical on long telephoto shots over 300mm, but even the shorter telephotos at slower shutter speeds really needed a cable release. Convinced, Darrell asked him to add it to the list. He asked Darrell what size shirt he wore, and when he said Medium, the Owner reached over to a pile of shrink wrapped photo vests emblazoned with the Canon logo and grabbed a large. He told Darrell the salesman was always delivering them, and he gave them away for free when someone bought a Canon camera and lens kit. Darrell asked if he could have 2, one for him, and one for his wife. The owner looked at Jackie and grabbed a medium (they ran large) and added it to the pile on the counter. Then he banged away at the register. 2 minutes later he announced the grand total \$1759.13.

Without saying a word, Jackie wrote a check for the total, handed it and her new driver's license to the owner, who wrote her DL# on the check and stuck it in the register. Then he proceeded to bag up everything, then helped them carry it to their car. When he was finished, he shook Darrell's hand and handed him his business card, saying he appreciated their business, and if he knew anyone he could help, he would appreciate it. Darrell thanked him again, and pocketed the card. When they got home, Darrell unpacked the car, and took his camera into his room, and started reading the manual. Jackie knew he was going to be busy for a while, and picked up one of her projects. She had a surprise for Darrell, she was going to build him a fanny pack kit too, and she got on the computer since they had an Ethernet LAN setup in the house connected to a high-speed DSL connection, and checked prices on another LTC Kukhri. Then she sent an E-mail to Sharp Squirrel to see if he could make her another one of those Kydex sheaths he was famous for. She found a LTC Kukhri on a huge discount later that afternoon, and ordered it

over the internet. She then went into the basement and started assembling a fanny pack kit for Darrell, and a BOB/GHB for the CRV.

She remembered reading something about hidden compartments and stuff on the internet, and found the article. Someone had an ingenious idea for a hidden compartment on the CRV so that thieves wouldn't be able to tell there was something there, and break into your vehicle to get it. She really wanted to put a pistol and some ammo in the vehicle, but since Darrell didn't have a CCW, she didn't want to risk the felony. She checked on the dimensions of the compartment and realized a broken-down Springfield M6 would fit along with several boxes of 22lr and 410 shotshells. She wanted to drive over to the body shop later that week, and have a friend of hers install the compartment in the CRV. He did custom work for all the Survivalists in the county, since the PTB would love nothing better than bust someone with a concealed gun. He made good money on the side making custom modifications after hours, and knew to keep his mouth shut. When she was finished, she knocked on Darrell's door and asked him what he wanted for Dinner. He suggested they go out for Chinese. She thought that was unusual for Darrell, but agreed. A couple of hours later, he came out of his office, all dressed and ready to go. They got into the CRV and drove over to the Chinese restaurant down the street. Since it was later in the evening, they missed the dinner rush, and the place was fairly empty, and the buffet had been recently refilled. Darrell used to let Jackie eat here occasionally because it was "All you can Eat" and cheap. Jackie actually liked the food. This time instead of ordering the Buffet, Darrell surprised Jackie by asking for menus. He ordered several items that were "family style" meaning enough food for 4 Chinese or 2 Americans. She added an order of Kung Pao Chicken, and Darrell smiled, it was his favorite dish. Half an hour later, enough food for an army showed up. Luckily, they had plenty of "to-go" cartons, and brought the leftovers home so when they were hungry an hour later, they could eat some more.

Chapter 14

The next morning, Darrell got working on his business plan - he had to have something in writing to show his co-workers if he were to have any chance to woo them away from his soon to be ex-employer. Around lunch, Jackie knocked on his door, and Darrell asked her for help. She made a couple of very good suggestions that he incorporated into the proposal right then and there. Jackie told him lunch was ready. Darrell realized all he had eaten all day was a bagel and several cups of coffee. He walked into the kitchen, and the table was set with iced tea, and 2 large Caesar Salads. Darrell pulled out Jackie's chair for her, then sat down across the small kitchen table from her, and they started eating. About half an hour later, the phone rang, and Darrell got up and answered it. It was his best friend at work. He had a tale of woe. He finally lost it with the Boss, and called him Oral Roberts to his face. Naturally the little fairy fired him on the spot! He was seriously confused when Darrell started laughing "Darrell I just got fired, if I don't get another job quick I'll lose the house!"

"Steve, relax and come on over to the house, I have something I'm working on that will save the day, matter of fact, you're an answer to prayer - so hurry up and get over here, I need your help!"

Two hours later, Steve showed up at his front door with a very curious look on his face. "OK Darrell, what's the big secret?"

"How would you like to work for me!"

"You're joking - how are you going to come up with the money?"

"Steve, I'm going to tell you something that can't leave this room. Remember all the problems Jackie and I were having?"

"Of course - I was your prime whining post!"

"Anyway, Jackie and I are back together and better than ever. We got stranded on a desert island, and the survival emergency was a slap in the face, major reality check. Anyway, we've gone way beyond patching things up, and are totally in love with each other again."

"Darrell - that's great, but what does that have to do for me?"

"When things were looking their worst, I started a separate bank account as a "contingency fund" just in case we got divorced. I didn't want to be left penniless. Anyway, I told Jackie about it, and transferred the funds back into our joint account when we got back yesterday. Steve, there's over a Million dollars in that fund!"

That got Steve's attention - with a million dollars in the bank they could easily start their own company and put that little fairy SOB out of business.

"OK Darrell, you have my undivided attention, what do you need?"

"Steve, you've always had a better head for business than I have - I need help with this business plan."

"Darrell, if you're going to go to all this trouble, you're going to have to incorporate. Do you really want to deal with all the BS that a California Corporation has to deal with?"

"What are you thinking?"

"If you want to work on government contracts, you can do that from anywhere in the US, especially with the Internet. Nevada is one of the easiest states to incorporate in, and if you stay out of the big cities, land is dirt cheap."

"Steve, mind if I bring Jackie in on this?"

"No Problem."

Darrell called Jackie in there, and asked her if she had any problems moving to NV.

Even with Steve there, Jackie jumped up and gave Darrell a big hug. "Darrell, I've wanted out of the People's Republic of California for years. The only reason I stayed is you're here!"

"Well I guess that settles that. What if we need to meet clients in California?"

Steve said "How about buying or leasing a twin engine turboprop?"

"You mean a plane - flying here - I don't know, I have a bad history with prop jobs."

"Darrell, it's totally different if you're flying it yourself. Besides with the "Patriot Act" the only way you can fly with any convenience is by Private plane. Even the commercial charters are getting hammered by the new regulations."

"OK, Steve can you look into that for us - I haven't a clue. Now all we have to do is figure out where in Nevada?"

Jackie spoke up "How about Winnemucca? It's literally in the middle of nowhere and within about 200 miles of Reno or Carson City if you fly. They have a municipal airport and hangar space. Land goes for less than \$1,000 per acre with water rights. If you set up an Alternative Energy system, with wells and a septic, you don't have to hook up to the grid. If electric power

is already on the property, you can buy a grid-intertie inverter and reduce or eliminate your electric bill by running your meter backwards during the day.”

Darrell asked her “How’s that work?”

“If you use less power during the day then at night, with a grid-intertie inverter, your meter runs backward, you’re literally generating excess power. If you build a big business building, and cover it with PV panels and use wind turbines, you can generate enough power to have almost no electric bill, and if the power goes down, you’re self-sufficient. Remember all those brown-outs and rolling black-outs we had last summer? With a AE system - it’ll never happen! Also its drier there, so evaporative coolers work well, which use way less energy than Freon-based Air conditioning.” Jackie knew she was hitting all of Darrell’s Environmental hot buttons, and she did so shamelessly - she really wanted the heck out of California!

Darrell started thinking, this is something he could do to “Save the Planet”. He almost started laughing out loud, then almost started crying. It was so simple, if he had the money to invest, he could do his part to save the planet, save money, and be energy self-sufficient. He too was getting tired of the Politically Correct atmosphere in California. He didn’t notice is as much before the trip, but really felt it lately. It wasn’t the mailman he greeted in the morning when he delivered the mail - they were now called “mail carriers” and some Dykes wanted to remove the word MAIL from the language because they claimed it was too close to MALE, the “hated species” that caused everything that was wrong with the planet. “Well let them have this screwed-up state, more power to them! They turned this state into a pigsty and now they could live there! As Governor Swartzenegger said, “Hasta La Vista Baby” - we’re outta here!”

“Jackie, can you do some internet surfing about incorporating in Nevada, and conditions in Winnemucca. Is there any place else in NV we should check?”

“Elko’s nice, but too far east if you intend to fly to California on a regular basis. They’re almost 300 miles east of Reno, and they too have cheap land, and a good-sized municipal airport. That would add over an hour of flying time, and make every trip to Silicon Valley an overnight trip, and frankly, I wouldn’t want to stay overnight in California!”

“Ok Jackie, could you check both locations just in case?” Jackie didn’t have the heart to tell Darrell she already had the information in a file, she had downloaded and printed it “just in case” she ended up divorcing Darrell. Now she could use the information to make things better. All she had to do was research the incorporation policies at the Secretary of State’s website. When she finished the incorporation research, she took Darrell aside.

“Sweetie, I have a confession. I’ve had all this data except the Incorporation stuff in a file for years. If we got divorced, I was going to move to Nevada, so I did my homework. I even have the names, numbers, websites and e-mail addresses of the realtors in the area. I hope you forgive me.”

“Jackie, what’s to forgive. This is like my “contingency fund”. We’re both using stuff we thought we might need if worse came to worse to make our marriage and our situation better. I’m glad you didn’t tell me in front of Steve, it might have been embarrassing.” Darrell gave Jackie a big hug and a kiss, and if Steve hadn’t been there, it might have led to something else. Instead, she gave him a rain check.

Steve chose that moment to walk in the door “Well I see you two lovebirds have REALLY patched things up - if you need me, I’ll be in Darrell’s office.”

Darrell walked into his office about 5 minutes later still blushing, but with a serious grin on his face. Steve guessed correctly that Jackie had given him a rather graphic “rain check”! They sat down and got back to work. By the end of the day, their new credit cards had shown up, and they had just about finished their Business Proposal. Their next stop would be to locate a property in Nevada, establish residency, and file incorporation papers in Nevada. Darrell almost forgot - they needed to sell their house in California. He got up, and asked Jackie to take care of it. She got onto the Internet, and located a realtor. She called him up, and talked for a while. The figure he quoted her was way more than what she thought the house was worth. He explained that where they were located, the land was worth way more than the house, and a developer would pay them half a million dollars for the land itself. He was sure that he could get a valid offer for \$850,000 with a 15-20 year old house on it. Jackie told him it had to be a cash transaction and a 30-day escrow or less since they were relocating to Nevada. The realtor got real curious, but Jackie told him they already had it taken care of. She didn’t want anyone in the PRC without “need to know” to know where they were moving to. Later that afternoon when they had gotten off work, Steve and Darrell called a couple more co-workers at home, and asked them to come over. Since Steve was involved, they came right on over. They had heard what he said to their fairy of a boss, and wished they had the big brass ones to tell the little pansy off! What Darrell and Steve proposed blew their socks off, and they agreed in principal to move with them and form their own company. They each were cash flush, and could easily contribute half a million each to be a member of the board and share the profits. Darrell’s plans had doubled overnight, now all he had to do was find a fat juicy Military contract. One of the guys knew that a \$10 Million dollar contract was coming due, and gave Darrell enough information to locate it. Darrell decided right then and there to bid on it, since bids were still open for 90 days, and it would take a month or two to get their corporation set up, and get all their Federal Contractor paperwork in order. Darrell told Jackie they were going to make a “hurry up” trip to Nevada before they left on their trip, and booked 3 tickets to Reno, NV on Reno Air with a Diesel Hummer waiting at the airport from a car rental place. The flight left at 0900 tomorrow from SF International, and would arrive by 11:00. That would give them 3 days to do field research and get back to home before they had to pack and leave for Alaska. Jackie called the realtor in Winnemucca, and told them they’d be there by noon tomorrow. She told the realtor what they were looking for, and he said that they had a property that would be perfect for them. It was 200 acres with water and power, subdividable into 2, 5, or 10 acre lots. The seller was highly motivated he said, and might carry a short-term note on the property with 20% down. Jackie hung up and walked over to tell Darrell, he wanted to buy the property sight

unseen, but Jackie cautioned him that the land might be not suitable for building on, and they would have to get “eyes on” to see if the land was suitable for building.

Darrell realized Jackie was smarter than he gave her credit for, and crafty too! Steve left right before dinner to go eat and give his wife the good news, and Jackie had dinner ready, Chicken Fajitas. After dinner, they quickly packed two bags, one a TSA approved Carry-on with a change of clothes and other stuff each, and the other was Jackie’s “drop me in the middle of nowhere and I’ll survive” kit with some extra clothes and other stuff. With the CCW, the Glock and the ammo would be no problem. Jackie realized they needed NV driver’s licenses before she could go on a firearms buying spree in Reno. She’d wait until they had a house in Winnemucca before they did that. They went to bed early, and Darrell cashed in his “rain check”, then they went to sleep.

The next morning, they ate a light breakfast, and Steve showed up and helped to pack the CRV and they drove the 2 hour trip (20 miles) to the airport. Jackie was so glad to be getting out of this sewer that she didn’t mind the traffic, she would only have to put up with it for a little while longer. They parked the car in a secure lot, and walked into the terminal. At the Reno Air ticket counter, Jackie showed her CCW, and filled out the paperwork for transporting a gun, then locked the case and the bag up tight before the ticketing agent got too good a look inside. She didn’t want the little twerp to stroke out on her. Finally they made it to the gate just as their flight was called. Darrell carried their carry-on, and Steve had a carry-on as well. They got to their seats minutes before the plane locked up and took off. An hour later, they landed at Reno International, while Jackie retrieved their luggage, Darrell and Steve got the rental vehicle and met her out front. Jackie was only waiting for a minute when they showed up with Darrell driving.

Jackie sat in the back and put her bag on the seat next to her, since she didn’t have a NV CCW. She heard the gun laws were exceptionally permissive in NV, and as long as the gun wasn’t concealed on your body, you could have concealed guns in baggage, or anywhere in your vehicle, or carried openly. Jackie gave Darrell directions to get onto 80 East, and Darrell noted the tank was full. Just as they were about to clear Reno, Jackie had Darrell pull into a gas station off the freeway, she needed to get a couple of things. 15 minutes later, she came back with a dozen 2-liter bottles of water and some other foodstuffs. She handed them each a large bottle of water that just fit into the cup holders, and put the rest in the back. Jackie explained that you should always have enough water for 3 days on you whenever you went into the desert. 5 miles later, Darrell understood why. The land had turned from Civilization to open desert about as fast as he blinked. The desolation was hard to understand until Jackie explained that this region of Nevada was high desert, and only by irrigating like crazy could they get green grass and trees. Darrell adjusted to it - after all, this terrain was natural, and Reno was a man-made oasis in the middle of the desert.

Three hours later, they arrived in Winnemucca, and Darrell pulled into a truck stop, knowing their diesel prices would be cheaper. While they filled up the huge tank, they took turns using

the facilities. Jackie bought some more water to replace what they had drunk, and they headed to the realtor's office. When they got there, the realtor was ready to go. Darrell suggested they take their Hummer. The realtor was impressed. Most Californians showed up at his office in little econoboxes that would get beaten to death on what passed for roads out there. He gave them the legal and section maps of the area, and jumped into the back seat with Jackie. He was grateful when Jackie handed him a bottle of water, and saw all the water in the back. Jackie said that if she were a guy, she would have been a Boy Scout. Remembering their motto, he had to laugh. "You'll do fine out here. It's amazing how many Californians come out here totally unprepared for the desert, and turn around and leave even before they've seen the property."

Darrell spoke up. "It's mostly Jackie's fault. I'm still new at this, but I'm learning to listen."

The realtor gave them directions out to the property. Jackie was right - it was in the middle of nowhere down a dirt ranch road. The realtor consulted his GPS, and told them to stop in 100 yards - they were almost there. When the GPS said they were at the southern boundary of the property, he told Darrell to stop, they were at the southern boundary of their property. Since there was nothing to see, and the land was totally flat, the realtor hopped out and pounded a Surveyor's stake with a yellow flag right where the GPS unit said to. He hopped back into the Hummer, punched in the next waypoint, which was the Northern boundary, and they stopped and he drove another survey stake with a red flag on it. The Realtor asked Darrell if he had driven off-road before, and when he confessed this was as off-road as he had even been, suggested they switch.

When he was in the driver's seat, he engaged the 4wd. He handed the GPS to Steve, and hit the next waypoint. The compass rose indicator told them where to go, and started beeping as they got close. When the GPS said they were there, he got out and pounded a 3rd stake with a blue flag on it. When he got back in, he punched in the coordinates for the last corner, and drove south. Jackie was amazed at how flat the ground was until she studied the section map the realtor had given her. According to the topo, this was an ideal building site, with less than 20 feet of elevation change across the entire property. As they were driving, Jackie asked about flooding and drainage. He said the nearest creek was over a mile away, and they got all their water from deep aquifers. The average well was over 200 feet deep around there. The property had 2 existing wells, and full water rights. Jackie asked what that meant, and he explained that property without water rights in Rural Nevada wasn't worth much, since there was only municipal water service in the cities and towns. Everyone else was on well and septic systems. Jackie asked about phone and electric. The realtor said that the phone and power lines followed the road, and they were responsible for paying for lines entering their property. He said the electric line was a 10Kv line, and they needed a transformer. Jackie asked if they had phone service, and how many lines. He explained that their phone service was only limited by what kind of lines they ran from the road, and their hardware and software. Darrell told the realtor what they were planning, and he said that would work great out here, since the zoning was open in this area, meaning they could do anything they wanted, including ranching or mining with the appropriate state permits. Subdividing into 10 20-acre lots and building a steel building for an

office wouldn't even raise an eyebrow, and the county would probably make them a deal on taxes and stuff. Finally they reached the last corner, and the Realtor jumped out and pounded a green stake. When they finished, Darrell looked around and asked the Realtor what the owner wanted. He said that he wanted \$1,000 an acre or \$200,000 dollars. Darrell asked if he would take \$800 an acre with 20% down cash, and the balance in 90 days. The realtor nearly fainted, stopped the Hummer, got out with his cell phone and made a call. 5 minutes later he was back. "The owner agreed to your terms, do we have a deal?"

Darrell looked at Jackie who was nodding her head vigorously. He reached over to shake the realtor's hand. "Yes we have a deal!"

The realtor drove back to his office, and had all the paperwork waiting for them. He asked Darrell if they were planning on incorporating in Nevada. Darrell said that was the reason they were buying property way out there and selling their houses. The realtor said that he was also a Lawyer, and had several shell companies already set up and incorporated in Nevada. He had one that was the equivalent of a California Subchapter S corp. Darrell asked him a few questions, and they soon had a solution. Since they would only have the 6 investors, they could set up a LLC or Limited Liability Corporation, put the property in the name of the corporation, and use the corporate name until they re-filed for a new name. When Darrell asked the realtor the name of the corporation, he pulled out a folder with the name Lucky Nugget LLC. Darrell thought that was appropriate, and told him that would do. Darrell wrote a check out of his account for 50 thousand dollars, which included the property down payment, the shell corporation, and a retainer fee from the lawyer. There was a conflict of interest with their lawyer acting as the seller's realtor, but Jackie overlooked it, since it solved a whole bunch of problems. With the shell corporation, they could immediately file for their Federal Contractor numbers and bid on the contracts. 4 thousand dollars was cheap for a shell corporation, since it would take 2-3 thousand dollars to do it from scratch and would take 2-3 months. This way, they could start the federal paperwork as soon as they got back. Actually, their new attorney could do it for them. Darrell turned to the realtor and said "I'm sorry, but I never got your name."

"It's Jim Bridger." when they started laughing, he said "NO really it is - My last name's Bridger, and my dad had a sense of humor." They didn't really believe him until he showed them his business cards.

"Sorry, Mr. Bridger. I've got a job for you. We're leaving on a 2-week Alaskan cruise, and I need you and Steve to get the Federal paperwork going so we can bid on federal contracts. There's a 10-million dollar programming contract that closes in a little less than 90 days from now that we want to bid on."

"Mr. Hayes, I'm sure the paperwork will be done when you get back, there isn't much real estate or legal business around here anymore. If you can afford me, I'd like to be your staff counsel of record, since my training is all in corporate law."

“Tell you what, we’ll see how things are when we get back, then the board will have to vote on it.”

“Fair enough. Just give me Steve’s info so I can get hold of him, and have a nice trip. When you come back, the Federal paperwork should be done and ready for signing, and the property will have closed escrow.” Jim gave Darrell some paperwork to review, and he signed what paperwork he needed to give Jim limited power of attorney to file the federal paperwork.

Chapter 15

They hurried back to their house to pack and get ready for their trip. They were to fly tomorrow from SF International to SeaTac and take a cab to the cruise docks. Jackie repacked knowing they were getting off the boat for 2 days in Alaska. She repacked her cold weather gear, and her cold-weather survival equipment. She called the cruise lines and got a list of the “Do Not Carry List” She was seriously disappointed. They were almost as PC as the airlines. She would have to leave her Glock and her big knife behind. She hated not having what she felt she needed to survive in any environment. She worked within the limits of the list, replacing all her big sheath knives with smaller folders. They weren’t on the list, and assumed the cruise line didn’t X-ray baggage yet. Darrell packed quickly and then spent the rest of the afternoon trying out his camera. When he shot a roll of film, he called the camera store, and the owner was still in. After he explained this was his first roll of film, and they were leaving on an Alaskan cruise tomorrow, he agreed to waive the usual 1-hr fee. Darrell told Jackie they were going out to eat since he needed to drop his film off to make sure the camera was working. They stopped at the camera shop first, dropped off the film, and went to the Chinese place again. An hour later, they were back at the shop, and the owner had the film developed and mounted. He let Darrell use his light table and Loupe to examine the slides. The owner checked some out as well, and gave Darrell a few pointers. The camera worked perfectly, and Darrell bought another brick of film to bring with them.

When they got home, Darrell packed his camera bag, making sure all his stuff was in it. He decided to leave the tripod behind, since he didn’t want to lug it all over Alaska, and he would only be able to use it for 2 days out of the entire trip. He walked out to the living room, and Jackie noticed that he didn’t have the tripod. She suggested that since he bought it, he might as well use it, and if it got too heavy, she’d carry it. That settled it, and Darrell got the tripod and added it to the pile. They went to bed early, and were too tired to do anything but sleep. The next morning they ate a light breakfast, and packed the car. Jackie drove to the airport, and they parked in the same lot as last time. They got there over half an hour early, so they took their time and cleared security easily. Since all of Jackie’s questionable stuff was in the checked luggage, she didn’t have any problems. They called for boarding of their flight right as they arrived at the gate, so Darrell handed the agent their boarding passes, and boarded the plane.

2 hours later, they arrived at SeaTac, and claimed their baggage, then walked to the taxi stand. The cabbies knew exactly where to go, and dropped them right in front of their ship. They were met by a baggage handler for the cruise line, who took their baggage, and told them it would be waiting in their room. They walked up the gangplank, and the purser gave them their room assignment, directions, and a magnetically coded passkey. They went to their room, checked their bags (Darrell had wisely gotten a locking professional camera bag that was pilfer-proof) and then walked out to the Promenade deck for the Bon Voyage. The ship pulled out of the berth right on time, and steamed toward the Sound. Darrell had transferred his gear from the bag to his vest before they came on deck, so he was ready to go. By the end of the third roll,

Jackie was ready to strangle him. She told him “Enough already! You’ve got a whole week to take pictures of me!” Darrell put down the camera, but left it ready to go in case he had something worth shooting. As soon as they got into the center of the channel, the captain came on the loudspeaker and said there was a pod of Orcas off the port bow. Darrell and Jackie were one of the first ones over to the port rail, and Darrell switched to his long lens since they were a ways off. They looked super close through the viewfinder, and Darrell filled the frame with the entire pod. After he shot off half a roll, he handed the camera to Jackie and showed her how to use it. She was impressed. The optics were as good as her \$300 spotting scope. She carefully handed the camera back to Darrell, who was looking out at the pod in awe. “Jackie - thanks for picking this cruise. I’ve never seen Orcas up this close before, and with that camera, I know the images are going to be close and sharp. I need to buy a good slide scanner when we get home.”

Jackie spent the rest of the day looking at the scenery, and holding Darrell’s hand, except when Darrell wanted to take a picture, which was about once every 5 minutes. Jackie hoped he would get it out of his system, or this could turn out to be a very expensive hobby. They had the first sitting for dinner, since they weren’t night owls, and were seated with a nice couple from Seattle. Jackie was glad Darrell had left the camera in the room; otherwise he might have shot another couple of rolls of the dining room. When they were finished, they walked out on deck to admire the view. There wasn’t much to see since it was dark out, it’s just that Darrell thought it was romantic. Jackie agreed, and by the time they got back to their room, she was definitely in the mood. They woke up with just enough time to shower and go to breakfast. After breakfast, they walked back down to the cabin so Darrell could grab his camera, and Jackie managed to grab something else, delaying their arrival on deck for several hours. They took another shower, and this time made it successfully onto deck without any detours or mishaps. Darrell found something to shoot, and burned off the rest of the roll. When he finished, they lounged on the deck chairs for a couple of hours, and the Captain announced another thing to see, so Darrell quickly reloaded and hurried over to get the shot. Jackie followed a little less quickly, and saw a beautiful sight. The clouds were scudding against the peaks of a nearby island, and the sunlight was coming through in rays. Darrell restrained himself and only shot 6 frames. With that adventure over, they went back to the lounge chairs. Last night’s and this morning’s activities had taken a lot out of them. They held hands and cat napped. Darrell only got up a couple of times to take pictures.

They went back to their cabin just long enough to dress for dinner, very careful not to give each other any excuse to attack each other - they were pooped! Dinner was excellent. Darrell ordered the baked Salmon, and Jackie ordered the Prime Rib. When they finished eating, Darrell took Jackie for an evening stroll around the deck. When they went back to the cabin, despite the urge to attack each other again, they showered together and crawled into bed, and promptly fell asleep in each other’s arms. The rest of the cruise passed uneventfully, and they disembarked in Alaska to spend a day ashore before the trip home. They had signed up for the Wildlife tour, so Darrell made sure they had plenty of film and the tripod, and Jackie made sure she had her fanny pack. Darrell got some outstanding shots of all the wildlife in the area, and they returned to the boat at sunset, just in time for dinner. This dinner was casual, so Darrell

dropped off his camera gear in their room, and they went to dinner. After dinner, they did their evening stroll, and went to bed.

Darrell shot another 10 rolls on the way back, but Jackie stayed in her lounge chair most of the time, since the scenery was the same as the trip up. When they docked in Seattle, Jackie was ready to go home and goof off for a few days. Between the hurry up trip to Winnemucca and the cruise, she was beat! They got one of the first cabs in line, and drove back to SeaTac. They were met at the door of SeaTac by a skycap who checked their bags for the flight back to San Fran International. They walked through Security and made their way to the gate. Half an hour later their flight was called, and they were among the first boarded. Jackie was feeling better since they were almost home. When they arrived in SF International, Jackie was too tired to drive, so she asked Darrell to drive. They stopped at the photo shop on the way home, and Darrell dropped off over 20 rolls of film. The owner was very happy to see him, and told him the film would be ready tomorrow. Darrell got back in the car, and Jackie was almost asleep. He drove home, and when they pulled into the driveway Jackie woke up enough to drag herself out of the car and into bed. Darrell unloaded the vehicle, and checked on Jackie, who was sound asleep. She didn't seem sick, so he let her sleep. He got on the internet, and located a slide scanner that scanned mounted slides. He checked the resolution, and realized that it exceeded the bitmap specs, so it would work just fine. He placed the order with his credit card, and then went in to check on Jackie. She was sleeping peacefully, and still seemed OK. He felt her forehead, and she wasn't running a fever. Darrell guessed she was just exhausted. He decided to go to bed early too, and took a shower then joined her.

The next morning, Darrell made a veggie omelet, coffee, orange juice and toast. The smell of coffee woke Jackie up, and she appeared to be OK. Jackie thanked Darrell for letting her sleep. She reminded him she rarely slept well in any bed but her own, and was exhausted due to sleep deprivation. A couple of hours later, the photo shop called, and said the film was done. He asked Jackie if she wanted to do some shopping, but she said she'd rather goof off and take a nap. She told Darrell that it was OK if he wanted to get his slides by himself, she'd be right there. Darrell grabbed the keys, and drove to the photo shop, picked up his slides and spent the rest of the day reviewing them with a manual slide viewer. He put the "Turkeys" into one pile, and the good shots into another. He was disappointed to discover that the Turkey pile was 5 times the size of the good shot pile. He hoped that would get better, but he didn't understand that the problem wasn't his skill with the camera, it was the experience to know when to shoot, and when to just watch. Not all images translated well to film. Out of 20 rolls, he had maybe 2 dozen excellent shots that he wanted to scan. Suddenly the phone rang.

Chapter 16

Darrell answered the phone. It was Jim Bridger, their attorney.

“I’ve got some good news, and I have some really good news.”

“Thanks Jim. I could use some right now, I just shot 20 rolls of film on that Alaskan Cruise, and only 24 of them are worth scanning.”

“Well, hate to break the news to you, but it will be that way until you develop your “eye”. Not everything you see makes a good picture. Your brain and eye are way better at interpreting images than any camera. If you’re shooting in flat light, or less than ideal light, the image won’t look as good as if the light is perfect. Ansel Adams used to wait for hours for the right light to shoot his pictures of Yosemite. Not that you need to wait for hours, but start thinking like that, and your pictures should get better. Sometimes it’s better not to shoot and just enjoy the view. I know, I was a pro photographer for years when I lived in NYC. Like you, I’m what they call a “Refugee from the Big City”. Ok, before I forget, the good news is your Federal Paperwork is in, and the really good news is Steve and I submitted a bid for that \$10 million government contract. They replied immediately, and unless someone submits a much lower bid before closing, the contract is yours!”

Jim could have heard Darrell whooping and Hollering all the way back in Winnemucca even without the phone!

All the commotion brought Jackie on the run “Darrell -what’s wrong?”

“Jackie, I think we got the contract.”

“You mean the \$10 Million government programming contract, I didn’t think it closed for a couple of months.”

“It doesn’t, but so far we’re the low bid, and according to Jim, unless someone beats our bid, we got the contract. I highly doubt some of these bloated top-heavy companies can come close. The only one that would have a chance would be another start-up. There aren’t many of those around.”

“Darrell that’s terrific. When do we find out for sure?”

Darrell remembered Jim was still on the phone when he answered the question. “Darrell, the bids close in 60 days. From what the reviewer said, you should hurry up and get relocated to Nevada, and get ready to service the contract.”

“Thanks Jim, can I call you back?”

“Sure, I’ll keep you posted.”

As soon as they hung up, the phone rang again. It was Steve with more information. “Darrell, I think we won the contract. The bidding agency is going to close bids this week due to the lack of bidders. All they have to do is publish the early close, and then they can close bids a week later.”

“Steve, I don’t know how to thank you?”

“This was mostly Jim’s work - that guy’s a genius, we need him badly!”

“Steve, can you call the other board members and tell them we are having our first board meeting tonight at 7:00pm, and to bring their spouses.”

“Sure Darrell, Talk to ya later!”

No sooner had Steve hung up than the phone rang again. “Grand Central Station, Darrell Speaking!”

The Bay area realtor was laughing his head off. “Guess your phone’s been ringing off the hook like mine has ever since I listed your house. Seems several people want you house, and it turned into a bidding war. They’re up to \$1 Million.”

Jackie got on the extension, and told him to take the highest cash non-contingent offer, and stipulate a 30-day escrow or less, things were happening fast on their end. He said that he’d get back to her.

Darrell walked over to Jackie. “Did I hear you right - they want over \$1 Million for the house?”

“That’s right, houses in the neighborhood according to the realtor have gone for anything from 1.1 to 1.3 Million cash!”

“Jackie, if we can sell the house for anything over a million, take the best cash non-contingent offer, and let’s get the flock out of here!”

“That’s what I told the realtor. He said he’d call back.” When they finished, Darrell showed Jackie the best of his shots, then showed her the pile of turkeys. She didn’t think the turkeys were so bad, and moved another dozen or two of them to a middle pile for Darrell to scan in as well.

Later that afternoon, the phone rang again, Jackie answered the phone, and the realtor said that

he had a cash non-contingent offer of \$1.2 Million for their house, with a 30-day escrow.

“Jackie, they waived ALL contingencies, including inspection. You guys must be sitting on a prime view lot.” Jackie thought about that, and they did have a pretty view of the bay from their house. She’d miss it, but not enough to keep from getting out of the PRC as fast as she could. “Take it, and close the deal. We’ll be over this afternoon to sign the papers.”

Jackie told Darrell the good news, and since he was already dressed, they got in the car and drove over to the realtors. 15 minutes later, the deal was done, and the next day the funds were transferred to an escrow account. They were overjoyed on the drive home. Jackie suggested stopping at the Chinese restaurant for an early dinner, so they drove over to the restaurant. They made it home by 5:00 and used the rest of the time to clean and prepare for the board meeting. Right at 7:00pm, Steve and the 3 other board members arrived with their wives. The guys were all co-workers and good friends, and the wives knew each other socially. Darrell and Steve gave the rest of the board the good news, and asked for a vote to make Jim Bridger the Corporate Attorney. After they heard what he had accomplished in two weeks, the vote was unanimous. Darrell then told them they sold their house, and how much they made, then told them that the corporation now owned 200 acres in Winnemucca, NV. Darrell and Steve wanted to relocate immediately, but the wives of the others resisted. They didn’t want to live in the “middle of nowhere” and were big time Liberal Socialites. Darrell didn’t push the issue, but insisted the corporate offices were going to be in NV for reasons of incorporation, and they could work from home if they wanted.

Steve then told the group about his research on twin engine corporate turbo-props. He located a 1990 Twin Commander turboprop for a renewable annual lease of \$50,000 per year plus the maintenance contract. It was an 8-seater, flew at 300 knots cruise, and had enough fuel on board for a 2,000 mile unrefueled trip. It could fly almost anywhere in the USA unrefueled. If they needed to fly to California or Washington DC for business, this was the way to go. Then he told them he had his Private Pilot’s license for almost 20 years, and all he needed to do was upgrade his license to a Commercial and get type rated in the Twin Commander. He said that would cost less than \$10,000 dollars. The good news was since it was a turboprop with reversible pitch, they could land almost anywhere, and if they built a runway near the building, and their own hangar, they could save 20-50 thousand dollars a year in hangar expenses, and they could have the fuel delivered to their location.

Darrell thought it was a good idea, and asked Steve about costs for the runway and stuff. “If we make the runway VFR only, all we need is a concrete or asphalt runway, a couple of windsocks for wind direction, and an Aviation radio. We could put the radio at the receptionist’s desk, and kill 2 birds with one stone.” The board voted on leasing the aircraft, and it was 4 to 1 in favor. Darrell asked the one dissenting board member why he didn’t want to lease the aircraft, and he admitted he was afraid of flying, and hadn’t flown in years. Darrell decided to take him into the other room and tell him about his experience, and how he got over his fear of flying. When they came back, the dissenter asked to change his vote, and it was unanimous.

Darrell then told them of his idea about making the entire project environmentally friendly, including Solar and Wind power to supplement and replace grid power in an emergency. Since the rest of the board was “environmentally conscious” this idea went over big, and they approved it unanimously. Darrell suggested they could do the same thing with their houses if they decided to move, and suddenly moving looked like a better option to the two holdouts who wanted to stay in California. They had a corporate plane to travel to California for trips, and the land was already paid for, and they could all get around a million dollars each for their houses, and replacement houses in Nevada would cost less than a 10th of that. Jackie mentioned the fact that the commutes in California were getting ridiculous, and the holdouts had to agree. It took them 2 hours each way to go to work. Darrell said that every board member would get a 10-acre lot to build on and develop. If they wanted gardens, horses, or dogs they would have plenty of room. If they needed equipment, the corporation could buy it and they would share.

Jackie said something that turned all their heads. “We really need to all buy diesel trucks or 4x4’s. It snows in the winter, and during the spring, any unpaved roads are so muddy that 2wd vehicles can’t make it. Even 4wd vehicles with low ground clearance like my CRV could get stuck. The realtor commented that he was glad we showed up in a Hummer, because so many Californians were driving econoboxes that would get beaten to death on their “roads”. I’m going to ask Darrell to buy us a Diesel F-250 and maybe a Hummer when we move there. We can buy two 10,000 gallon tanks, one for diesel and one for aircraft fuel and co-locate them near the hangar. The pumps would have a meter, and we would be on the honor system for paying for fuel for personal use. Billing and payment through the corporation gives us a cheaper price, and tax incentives.”

They all thought that was an excellent idea. The mention of snow threw the wives of the holdouts back in the “California” camp, since they had lived in California all their lives, and were used to going out and doing whatever they wanted, whenever they wanted. Darrell knew it would be a major adjustment for them. He thought that when the buildings and houses were built, they could come out and visit, and they might change their minds.

Darrell put the meeting up for questions, and there were a lot of them, most involved relocation issues from the wives of the holdouts. Finally Jackie spoke up and lowered the boom on their Sheeple wives.

“Ladies, life in Nevada is totally different than California. You don’t drive around the corner for a cup of Starbucks, and across town to the country club for a tennis match. Then again, you don’t have some idiot in Sacramento dictating everything you can and cannot do. Nevada is one of the freest States in the Union. They even have whorehouses in some counties. The reason we are moving is frankly Darrell and I are tired of the cesspool that California has become. The beaches, tennis courts and golf courses frankly aren’t worth the hassles and stuff you have to put up with living here. If you want to stay, more power to you, but we’re getting out as quick as we can. We’ve already sold our house, and can move as soon as they build our house in Winnemucca. You guys need to sit down and talk this over with your wives. If you choose to

stay in California, you can work from home, but I can tell you right now, things are going to get worse, not better. We have rampant illegal immigration stretching services to the breaking point. Every summer we have brownouts or rolling blackouts because some bureaucrat won't let companies build more generating capacity. Instead of getting cleaner, our environment is getting dirtier due to overcrowding. Frankly there's too many damn people here, and it's getting worse, not better. Lots are getting smaller, and housing is going through the roof due to the value of the land. Our realtor told me we could have gotten \$800,000.00 just for the bare land. That's insane! If someone is dumb enough to pay over $\frac{3}{4}$ of a million dollars for an acre of land, I'll let them. We paid \$160,000 for 200 acres of land in Winnemucca! Besides, the next earthquake could devastate everything you've worked for, and your "earthquake insurance" won't pay replacement cost! You want to stay here, be my guest, but we're getting the flock out of here!"

After that speech, the husbands of the holdouts looked their wives in the eyes and told them - "I'm moving to Nevada! If you want a tennis court, we can build one on the property! You and Jill can play all day for all I care!"

Between their husband's and Jackie's dressing down, the two holdout wives realized they were between a rock and a hard place. If they decided to stay here, it would be without their rich husbands - bye-bye country club, bye-bye shopping...Hello Food Stamps! To say they got a rude awakening was an understatement.

When the meeting broke up, all 4 board members told Darrell they were putting their houses on the market the next day, and to plan for them to relocate to Winnemucca in the next 30-60 days. Later that evening, Darrell called Jim at home, and said "We'll need 5 2,000sf houses, a 5,000sf steel building for the office, and a steel building big enough to hold a Twin Commander with room to spare, and 2 10,000 gallon tanks. One for diesel, and one for jet fuel for the Twin Commander. Ok, and by the way, the board voted unanimously to make you the corporate attorney. I'll be in Winnemucca next week or sooner to sign the paperwork. Can you contact a local home builder and get plans and prices. Also, we all want the Thin Film technology PV roofing on the southern exposures of all our houses, and the 2 steel buildings. And we all want at least 8 foot basements. Will you take care of that for me, and call me back. One other thing, can you talk to Steve and arrange the lease of a Twin Commander for the corporate aircraft, and get his license upgraded. Thanks, talk to you tomorrow."

When Darrell got off the phone, they went to bed.

Chapter 17

The next morning, Darrell woke up and made breakfast, he was getting really good at Omelets, but they were running low on groceries. Since they were moving, it didn't make sense to go shopping, so he made a list of essentials that they would eat in the next two weeks before they moved to Nevada. He made a veggie omelet with canned veggies, although he preferred fresh, with coffee, juice and toast. As usual, the smell of coffee brewing woke Jackie. After breakfast, Jackie made a prioritized list of things they had to do prior to moving. First, they had to contact the movers and set the date for pickup and where they wanted it delivered. Then they needed to pack all the essentials, which meant a trip to the store for boxes, bubble wrap, markers and tape. Jackie saw that Darrell had a very abbreviated grocery list, and realized he was thinking ahead as well. Around 10:00, Jim called "Darrell, we need to talk about these houses. No contractor in Nevada can build a house in less than 30 days; the permitting can take a week or two by itself. If you're not stuck on a stick-built house that is built on site, I know several Manufactured housing manufacturers in Idaho that can get you a house in 30-60 days assuming you can get the permits and dirt work done in time. They can build anything from 1,000 - 3,000 square foot houses, and ship them from Idaho. A 2,000 square foot house from them set up will run 50-80 thousand dollars. A site-built house will run from 100-120 thousand, take longer, and might actually not be made as well if they are sloppy or if they have bad weather before the house is sealed up. This manufacturer can do PV roofing as well, and builds it into the cost of the roof as an option."

Darrell got the phone number and website for the manufacturer, thanked Jim and hung up.

"Jackie, would you have any problems living in a manufactured house?"

"Do you mean a Mobile Home?"

"No from what Jim said, they're identical to site-built houses, except they're built in a factory, shipped to the site and set up. They're usually better made and they can make one faster than a site-built house. Jim gave me the website, so if you want to look at pictures and floor plans, I've got it."

"Sounds like an idea Darrell, I'll look at it right after I finish this list I'm working on of stuff we have to do to move to Nevada."

"Sorry Jackie, it totally slipped my mind. Let me know what I can do to help."

Darrell remembered he hadn't given notice at work, called up his old job, and told the head of personnel he quit. She told him he had 3 months of accumulated leave and sick time, and \$100,000 dollars in accumulated profit sharing. She asked him if she could mail him a check. Darrell asked when the check would be ready, and she said it would be ready that afternoon.

Since they had 2 weeks before they had to leave, Darrell told her to mail it. She asked if he could send her a letter of resignation, Darrell said he would e-mail one to her within the hour. When he hung up, Darrell e-mailed a brief letter of resignation to her attention, making sure he requested all accrued vacation, leave and profit sharing he was due, and where to mail the check. He sent it High Priority with a return receipt requested. Then he told Jackie the good news that they would have a check in the mail for over \$200,000 from work in a couple of days. Jackie was overjoyed that they would be so cash flush for a while. Things might get a little tight until the money from the Federal contract started coming in.

Jackie went into her office, and turned on her computer, then went to the website for the housing manufacturer. She fell in love with one of the 2,000 square foot designs. She called Darrell, who agreed, but made several suggestions from the options list that she agreed with, like Cathedral ceilings, ceiling fans in all the rooms, and a huge roof mounted Evaporative cooler. He also decided on a huge screen room out back. They could use it for entertaining and relaxing in the summer. Jackie said she would like a Jacuzzi hot tub, and he modified the idea to enclose one of the corners of the screen room to hold it, and hold the heat in during the winter. Darrell had a brainstorm, and suggested solar water heating, since the Jacuzzi used a lot of hot water, and it could also act as a booster for the propane powered water heater. Jackie made a note to add a bunch of solar water heater panels to the roof of the screen room, which would face south as well. She also made sure the roof of the screen room would be heavily insulated, since the solar water heaters might heat up the roof. She added 2 ceiling fans to the screen room as well.

Scanning down the list of options, she saw something that attracted her eye. It was a propane powered cast iron stove with fake logs, that would work for heating the living room, or as an alternate heat source if everything else failed. She also doubled the recommended propane storage from 500 to 1000 gallons, then she remembered she wanted a propane powered backup generator, and changed that figure to 2,000 gallons. She knew propane stored forever, and that would give them a 6-12 month supply of propane even if the tank were half empty. She also added all stainless steel commercial kitchen grade appliances for the kitchen. She ordered a propane powered range with 4 burners and a wok burner, and a convection oven, and a huge range hood with a Halon fire suppression setup. She figured for what they wanted for the range, she might as well get top line equipment. Since they would be over an hour out of Winnemucca, if they wanted Chinese, they'd have to make it themselves. She thought about that, and doubled the capacity of the freezer she ordered. She also made a note to get a Costco membership. She knew if they wanted to do any real shopping, it would have to be in Reno, NV, since Winnemucca didn't have squat except for a Wal-Mart and maybe a K-mart.

When she was done, she called Darrell in, and showed him what she picked. He highly approved of the commercial grade equipment, and was very pleased by the wok burner, now all he'd need was a good commercial wok to match. When she was finished, she called the manufacturer and spoke to the local rep. When he realized that he had a deal for at least 5 houses, he got real polite and helpful, especially since they were ordering most of the expensive

upgrades. He told them that they would take care of the permits and the dirt work, including pouring the basement and support columns for the house. Jackie told him that they were out on a ranch road in Winnemucca, and where the property was. He recommended Granite Construction to handle cutting and grading their private road, and assured them that they could handle grading and paving a roadway suitable for landing a twin engine turboprop on. Jackie thanked him and asked him to e-mail a firm price and production schedule, as well as a date of occupancy. He got a little nervous there, since they usually guessed on that date, but Jackie explained that they had already sold their house in California, and had to be out by the end of the month, and she would NOT be happy if they had to spend weeks in a motel. He got the message loud and clear, and told her he would have a firm occupancy date, with the usual weasel words for weather delays etc. She said that it better not be a guess, and that they wanted a hard completion date with a thousand dollar per day penalty for every day they were late. She presented it as a take it or leave it. He had half a million dollars staring him in the face, so he took it, and made a note to speak to the production manager before he put anything in writing.

When she finally hung up, she contacted Granite Construction in Winnemucca, and spoke to another salesman. She told him what she wanted, and he assured her they could handle it. They built most of the roads in Nevada, and could easily build a road that doubled as the runway for a twin engine turboprop. They could even install the necessary warning lights to keep people off it when they were using it as a runway. Jackie was impressed, and asked them to e-mail her a quote and production schedule. She explained that it needed to be built Right Now, since they had to move 5 manufactured houses down that road in less than 30 days. He said that they had a crew available, and could start work the day after the contract was signed. He would e-mail her a quote and schedule that afternoon. She thanked him and hung up.

Jackie consulted her list, and realized she needed to hire the movers. She got on the internet and compared prices. Finally she did a search for Bay Area moving companies, and found one less than 20 miles away that charged by the pound and the mile, with an hourly labor charge for loading and unloading. She called them and talked to another salesman, and explained the situation, that they didn't have a house to move to yet. He said they could store her stuff in their secure storage facility for up to 30 days for a \$100 flat fee. She asked him to e-mail her a quote including the storage fee, and a pick-up date including a loading crew, since they were in no condition to load the truck. He had a better idea since they were going to store everything locally. They could come over with a large bobtail truck, and take it directly to their storage facility without tying up the 18-wheeler. Even if it took more than 1 trip, they would be way ahead of the game. He said they would give her a detailed inventory, and a couple of rolls of anti-pilferage tape for her boxes. If the tape was removed or disturbed for any reason, it left an indelible mark on the box with the word VOID showing. She thought that was a good idea, and asked him to send a quote for that service, with delivery at a later date.

When she was finished, Jackie told Darrell all she had got accomplished that day, and asked Darrell if he had any ideas. The only thing he could think of was to keep Jim in the loop, since the roadway would be a corporate expense and project. Darrell thought about what they wanted

to do with the building once they got there, and remembered they needed a top-drawer Sun Microsystems mini-computer, and a robustly secure high-speed microwave connection to the internet, as well as any client's computer systems to transfer data back and forth. He got on the internet again, and located a company that would install and service a Sun Microsystems computer and a Ethernet. He sent them an e-mail requesting a quote for the system he wanted. Next he checked out several office supplies sites, and located someone who had good prices, and delivered to that area of Nevada. Jackie contacted Jim, and told him what they were up to. Jim recommended a good Steel Building manufacturer/installer in Winnemucca, and told Jackie he had a quote for the building and installation. Jackie asked him if they needed a graded road to work with, and he admitted their 18-wheeler transports would need to wait until after the dirt work was done to be able to deliver. Her computer beeped indicating she had an incoming e-mail. It was the quote from Granite Construction. She printed it then forwarded it to Jim's office. He had a copy 2 minutes later, and reviewed it with her. Jim told her that it looked good to him. Jackie yelled for Darrell, since she didn't have the authority to approve this for the corporation. Darrell reviewed the quote, and talked to Jim, and sent a reply back to them approving the quote, and requesting a contract for signature. An hour later, a contract was e-mailed to Darrell's attention. He reviewed and signed it electronically, then e-mailed it back with high priority and a return receipt. According to the contract, Granite would start construction of the roads and runway tomorrow morning. Jackie called the manufactured home company, and told them Granite would start construction of the roads and runway tomorrow, and to coordinate with them. She received an e-mail confirmation that their construction and installation supervisor was aware of the information and would coordinate with Granite Construction regarding the dirt work and installation of the house. With all that accomplished, Jackie told Darrell she was going shopping, grabbed his list, and headed to the grocery store, and the moving supplies company. When she returned, Darrell helped her unload. She was glad they had the big hatchback, since it was stuffed with boxes, bubble wrap, tape and markers. The front seat held the groceries she got. Since Darrell wasn't busy, he made dinner while Jackie got things organized to pack up and move. After dinner they went to bed, tomorrow would be a long day!

Chapter 18

Darrell almost kicked himself when he woke up and remembered he'd forgotten to call the power and telephone companies. He called Jim and asked him who provided power and phone service in Winnemucca. Jim grabbed his phone book and gave Darrell the phone numbers. He called the power company first, and found out it could take almost a month to get power to the property. He didn't like that answer, so asked for the supervisor. When he spoke to him, he asked how long it would take to connect power from the road to a new business, and was told 1-2 weeks. Now he was getting somewhere. The supervisor was most helpful, and gave Darrell all the information he needed to get power from the roadway to the business and houses. He had to purchase a step-down transformer to step the voltage from 440volts to 220 volts, and a distribution box to distribute the power to the different sites. The utility had some used ones for sale, and they were in good condition, that they could install next week. If he wanted new equipment it could take months to get it from the manufacturer. Darrell asked the supervisor if he knew Jim Bridger. When he said he did, Darrell told him he was the corporate attorney, and could act on their behalf to get the power connected. He said he would call Jim right away.

Darrell asked if they could bury the power lines, since they were installing a runway for aircraft on the property. The supervisor told Darrell it was a good thing he mentioned that, or else they would have done a lot of work for nothing. Darrell said that Granite construction was working on cutting, grading and paving the road today, and if they could get right on it, they could cut the trench and bury it right alongside the road bed. He thought that was a good idea, and knew the supervisor of Granite Construction in Winnemucca personally. Darrell said that they would also need to bury the phone line. The power company supervisor said that would not be a problem, but he needed to call the phone company right now so they could coordinate their crews. Darrell needed to get service, and he needed to call their crew supervisor so they could work together and dig one trench. Darrell thought that was awfully nice of the supervisor, and thanked him for everything, then disconnected and called Jim and gave him a quick heads-up. Jim said he had to go, his other line was ringing, Darrell said that was probably the power company supervisor, then hung up. Darrell called the phone company, talked to the supervisor after asking for him directly, and told him what was happening. The phone company supervisor said the power company was pretty good about coordinating crews. He said they should have phone service by the end of the month as well. When he was finished, he transferred the call to the business office so Darrell could start the paperwork.

With that problem taken care of, Darrell made breakfast, then when they were finished eating, helped Jackie start packing stuff. They started on the closets in her room where they stored junk they hadn't used in years, but kept for sentimental reasons. Jackie found a bunch of clothes she hadn't worn in years, and decided instead of packing them; she would donate them to the homeless shelter. Going through their closets, she found more and more stuff to donate. Darrell was busy building boxes and taping the bottoms while Jackie stuffed clothes into them and wrote on the box what they were. Stuff they were donating went into several large trash bags.

Jackie stacked the stuff they were going to keep in one corner, and the junk in the other. As soon as she finished with her closet, she started on his closets. She left his computer and stuff alone, but unloaded his closets. Next they started on the garage, by the end of the day they had a good dent on their packing, and were dead tired. Darrell made dinner, and they went to bed early.

The next morning, Steve called and said that they were good to go with the aircraft, Jim had finalized the contract, and Steve was going to start taking his training for his commercial license, and would have his Commercial ticket by the end of the month, and be type rated in the Twin commander two weeks later. Darrell said that would be perfect since Granite Construction should have the runway done and the hangar would be built shortly thereafter.

Right after he got off the phone with Steve, Jim called and told Darrell that he and Steve needed to come to his office tomorrow and sign some paperwork for the business. One of them was his employment contract, since he had almost exhausted the retainer, and needed to be on payroll. Darrell said they would be there by noon. Jackie tapped Darrell on the shoulder, and asked if she could talk to Jim. She asked Jim if they had taken care of the address with the post office and if there were a DMV office in Winnemucca. Jim assured her that Winnemucca actually had a DMV office, and he had filed the paperwork with the Postal Service to activate their Rural Route address. They would install the gondola for mail delivery next week, but he had the form with the address so they could get Nevada driver's licenses. Jackie thanked Jim and hung up, then turned to Darrell.

"OK, dear everything is set for us to establish residency in Nevada. We're going to need to get NV driver's licenses, and I need to get a NV CCW. I'm pretty sure the Sheriff of Humboldt County will just issue one when I present my CA CCW. Maybe I should call first. Oh, One other thing, when do you want to buy the new vehicles? We really need to buy them in Reno, since Winnemucca is too small to have a Hummer dealer. We could make that plane trip a one-way ticket, since it's only an hour longer to drive than to fly, and then we have to drive home anyway from the airport."

"As usual Jackie, you always come up with the brilliant ideas. That sounds like an excellent idea. I'll get on the Internet and order them from a Reno dealer, and we can pick them up tomorrow. You said we needed a Hummer and an F-250."

"Darrell, let's just get either the F-250 or the Hummer for now. The truck is over 40 thousand, and the Hummer goes for over 60."

"Ok, let's get the F-250 Diesel with the Super cab and a towing package so we can tow stuff. I'm pretty sure before this is over we will need to tow stuff. We can always get the Hummer later when we have the money - we need to watch our pesos until the contract is granted and we start getting paid. That reminds me, we need to get those tanks delivered, or we need to fill up every time we go to Winnemucca. I'll call Jim and make sure he ordered them. Damn, almost

forgot, I need Jim to contact a Well drilling company to see about some extra wells, and whether or not it would be better to have 1 big well, or 6 small ones.”

“Darrell, if you want any firefighting capability, you really need 1 big water tower, say 10,000 gallons, and a pressure pump to boost the pressure in the 6 inch main. You can install standard FD hydrants, or at least the rural equivalent, and buy a trailer to haul behind the F-250 with a 500 gallon water tank, a high pressure pump, a 100 foot reel hose, and 100 feet of draft hose to hook to the hydrant. We might want 500 feet of draft hose due to the huge lot sizes. Also, we are going to need some specialized fire equipment for the hangar, but we should be able to get by with large CO2 fire extinguishers for that, and a Halon suppression system for the hangar. With the hangar door closed, the Halon will suppress any fire by eliminating free oxygen. No oxygen, no fire. You might want to equip the computer room of the office with a Halon system as well. While you’re at it, you should set up the pump house next to the main tank with a solar roof, and we need to find a spot for a wind farm.”

“I forgot all about the wind turbines. Can you put that on my do list?” When they were finished, Darrell got on the Internet, and located the Ford dealership in Reno, and checked the price on an F-250 diesel super cab. The new ones were over 50,000 dollars, but they had one that was a 1998 lease return for \$30,000 with a 10,000 mile/1 year parts and labor warranty. It was the Ford 2-tone blue with a full-size bed, a turbodiesel, towing package, dual tanks and best of all; it was 4wd with limited slip differentials, and external Warn hub locks. It was the LTD package with air, auto, leather interior and tinted windows. Darrell realized a good deal when he saw it, and contacted the dealer. The sales manager agreed to hold it for him until noon tomorrow. Darrell thanked him, and called up the airline and switched the tickets to one-way. Darrell called Jim and let him know they were going to be later that afternoon; they had to buy a truck first. Darrell called Steve, and told him what was going on. He agreed to meet them at their house at 6:00 the next morning. Darrell made dinner since it was getting late, and they packed for their trip to Reno. Jackie decided they needed to make a few stops in Reno while they were there, but she’d cross that bridge when she got there. They got to bed around 9:00 that night and went right to sleep - they were exhausted.

Their alarm went off at 5:00, and they got out took showers and got dressed. Jackie had a pot of coffee brewing in the auto coffee maker, so they had coffee and bagels for breakfast. The doorbell rang at 6:00, and they grabbed their bags and piled into Steve’s vehicle. They made it to the airport by 7:30 since they were on the road before the peak of rush hour. Jackie went through the hassle of checking her Glock, and they went through security without any problems. They made it to the boarding area 5 minutes before the flight left, and they were boarded immediately. Two hours later, they were landing in Reno. The dealership had their courtesy van waiting at the airport, and they were driven to the dealership. Jackie looked over the vehicle, and realized why they hadn’t sold it so far, the carpeting was worn, and the upholstery was definitely not new. Someone had mounted some cheap knock-off tires on the truck, and it had steel rims. Jackie told Darrell all that, then she looked under the hood. Everything looked OK, but dealerships routinely steam cleaned motors, so you couldn’t tell if it leaked oil. She

pulled the dipsticks for the oil and transmission fluid, and smelled the fluids, because even if they had drained and replaced the fluids, the burnt smell usually remained. The oil and transmission fluid smelled OK, then she checked the radiator fluid. The radiator was fine, and it looked like the belts and hoses had been recently replaced. Darrell had printed out the relevant pages of the Blue Book, and compared the price the dealership wanted, and decided to drop his offer by 10,000 dollars. Jackie also insisted that the Dealership replace the tires with BFG All-Terrain BO 31x10.5x15 radials and a good set of aluminum rims like it came with from the factory. The sales manager acted all hurt and offended, but Jackie wasn't buying any of it!

“Hold your horses for a second. According to the Blue Book, this exact model is only worth \$30,000 in excellent condition. This vehicle has 60,000 miles on it, the carpeting is badly worn and the upholstery really needs to be replaced. There's body damage, and the wheels and tires aren't stock. According to the Blue Book, we shouldn't pay a penny over \$20,000 for a vehicle with high mileage and body damage, not to mention the interior and the cheap knock-off tires and wheels. YOU know for a fact that factory ships the F-250 LTDs with quality aluminum wheels. Either you replace the wheels and tires like I said, and take \$20,000 cash plus tax and license, or we're walking.”

Jackie turned to leave, and Darrell followed her. Just before they left the property, the sales manager came running up behind them “Wait, Stop...Ok, you have a deal. I'll do it exactly as you said, and fill both tanks too.”

Jackie told him they had 1 hour to fix the wheels and tires, and get the paperwork done. They would pay the balance in full by check. Darrell said it was a California check, but they had over a million dollars in the account. He gave the sales manager the name and number of the bank and the account number so he could verify the balance. He was back 5 minutes later with a big smile pasted on his face. The bank president assured him that the account had a 6-figure balance, and they were personal friends of the bank president. “Mr. Hayes, your bank verified your balance, so we will take your check.” Then he started trying to sell them a bunch of stuff. They said NO to everything since they weren't about to drive to Reno to get their FREE lube jobs every 90 days (they paid for them in advance, but he made it sound like the deal of the century.) 59 minutes later, the contracts were filled out, and the vehicle appeared out front, washed with brand new BFG KO 31x10.5x15 tires and the Ford aluminum 10 inch rims. Jackie could tell they were 10 inch rims by the way the tires sat, still she asked to borrow the sales manager's tape measure. She checked under the vehicle, and sure enough there was a 5th BFG tire under there with an aluminum rim. Evidently they decided that they were better off getting this lot queen off the lot than to try and make a few more bucks. Jackie nodded OK, and Darrell handed the check to the sales manager, who handed him 2 sets of keys.

Jackie jumped up into the driver's seat, Darrell into the passenger, and they threw their luggage in the back seat next to Steve. Since they were running late Jackie decided to skip the stops she wanted to make, and headed for I-80 east. She checked all the gauges and switches before they left the driveway. Everything worked including the radio. Jackie pulled into the same gas

station on the outskirts of town that they had last time, and grabbed a bunch of water and snacks, then they got back on the interstate headed to Winnemucca. They got to Jim's office 3 hours later, signed the paperwork, and Jackie asked where the Sheriff's office and the DMV were. Jim told them they were right next to each other. Jackie stopped first at the Nevada DMV office and got new Nevada driver's licenses, then she walked over to the Sheriff's office, and asked if the Sheriff was in. Luckily for her he was in doing paperwork, and asked her how he could help. Jackie showed him her California CCW, and the copy of the corporate paperwork and said they were moving to Humboldt County in a couple of weeks, and she'd appreciate a Nevada CCW. Knowing how hard it was to get a CA CCW, he opened a drawer and pulled out a NV application for a CCW, and filled it out with her CA CCW # and her Nevada address off the driver's license. He said that there was a \$140 fee for the license, and it was renewable every 5 years. The fee was less for renewal. Jackie took out her checkbook and wrote a check. She handed him a check, and he handed her a temporary CCW good for 90 days while the paperwork got processed. She shook his hand, then ran out to the truck. They debated whether to head back or check out the property. Jackie pointed out that Granite had only been working on it for 2 days and she doubted it was driveable right now. Instead they drove back to Reno, since Jackie wanted to get a Costco membership, and Steve wanted to go to a casino and gamble. They decided to get a couple of rooms and drive back tomorrow since it was getting late. Jackie got the Costco membership, then they went to the Circus Circus and got rooms. Steve went down to gamble, while Jackie and Darrell crashed since they were exhausted. They agreed to meet for dinner in 3 hours in front of the Hayes' room.

3 hours later, Steve knocked on their door "I'm buying dinner; I just won \$500 at Blackjack!" Jackie and Darrell were happy for him, but surprised. They didn't know Steve gambled. Actually the way Steve played Blackjack wasn't gambling. He was an amateur card counter. It seemed he had a photographic memory, and could remember every card dealt, and the intelligence to know the probability of the desired cards being dealt in that hand. With that knowledge, playing Blackjack was more of a mental exercise than gambling, as he had proven in several College Frat blackjack games. He never played for money until now, and probably wouldn't get the chance again any time soon, he just wanted to test his theory that his talent would work in the real world. It wasn't perfect, he made some mistakes. But he was way ahead of everyone else at the table, including the dealer. Winning 500 dollars in 3 hours at a small-stakes table (\$5.00 limit) was a near-impossibility. Steve was sure he was on a list somewhere, and if he came back, he was sure they would refuse to let him play. The three of them went to the nicest restaurant in the hotel, and by the time they left, Steve had dropped over \$100.00 for dinner and a nice bottle of wine for 3. After dinner, Darrell and Jackie begged off since they were still exhausted. They got undressed and went to bed, and fell asleep after a little more than cuddling.

The next morning, they ate breakfast at the Buffet which was actually good, and cheap. After settling their bill, they packed the F-250 and drove home. They dropped Steve off at the airport to retrieve his car, and they drove home and continued packing. Someone must have known they were home, because 5 minutes later the phone rang, and kept ringing as soon as they got

off. Darrell handled most of it, since they were business calls. Seems 2 out of the 3 board members had accepted offers on their houses, and the 3rd one had 4 buyers in a bidding war like Darrell and Jackie did. He said he would close at the end of the week. They were amazed at how stupid people in California were. Most of them had paid less than \$200 thousand for their houses 10 years ago, and the lowest offer anyone had accepted was a cool million dollars. They were definitely cash flush, and could now do this right! All 3 of them agreed to contribute a full million dollars to the corporation to match Darrell and Jackie's contribution. The corporation was now worth over \$5 million dollars, less the \$160 thousand for the land, but that should appreciate as soon as they developed it. Darrell called Jim and gave him the good news. He told Darrell he had taken the liberty of opening a corporate bank account at the Winnemucca branch of Bank of America since they were the only bank in town set up for electronic banking, and with the kind of money they were depositing, he insisted on waiving all the fees. For a \$5 million deposit, they readily agreed, it would help their cash equity position. Jim also recommended they open personal accounts there, since they offered the same fee waiver for any officer of the corporation. Since they were all officers, Darrell thought that was a good idea.

Next the computer company called and asked Darrell a few questions. Little did the salesman know that his usual tactic of intimidating buyers with his knowledge wouldn't work, and backfired badly, and they almost lost the sale. Darrell asked to talk to the owner, who mollified Darrell by apologizing for the salesman, and offering a 10% discount on the system. Since the entire system was going to cost over \$100,000 this was a substantial discount, and coincidentally was the same dollar amount as the Salesman's commission. They were going to install a huge Sun Microsystems server, a 10-node Ethernet system and a microwave satellite transceiver and all the hardware and software to run the system. The nodes were going to be top-line HP Pentium 4 machines with a 2.8ghz clock, 1G of ram, a 100gb super fast SCSSI drive and controller, a CD/DVD combo RW drive and a 24-inch LCD monitor. The monitor Darrell ordered cost almost as much as the PC, and then he included 10 UPS and 2 high-speed color laser printers, and 5 color inkjet printers. He asked for a 10-year maintenance and repair contract, meaning that if anything went wrong outside of the manufacturer's warranty, the computer company would repair or replace it at their cost. They recommended a huge UPS for the server, and Darrell thought it was overkill, but agreed, since it could take a second for the transfer switches to kick in with their AE system. Darrell told the owner to e-mail him a quote, and he would advise them when the building would be ready to install the system. The owner asked Darrell if they could come in there as soon as the shell was up to run cabling, since it was easier and cheaper to run the cabling without the wallboard in the way. When the crews wanted to install the wallboard, they would just cut around their outlets. He would need a floor plan of the interior to know where to locate the power and outlet jacks for the Ethernet.

Finally Darrell got a call from Granite Construction, they decided to include digging a utility trench next to the roadway in their bid, since they had the earthmoving equipment on site, and Jim had already approved it. He was calling to say that the trench was dug, and the grading was done. As soon as they had the conduit for the phone and electric laid, they could fill the trench, pave the runway and chip seal the rest. Darrell asked how much it would cost to cut a trench

across their grade deep enough and wide enough to run a 12 inch main deep enough so it was below the freeze line. They said they could do that, and would drop a piece of 12 inch water pipe in the trench, mark the ends, and then backfill and compact back to grade. He said it was a good thing Darrell asked now before they had started compacting, or it would have been much more. He quoted \$2,0000 labor plus the pipe. Darrell gave him verbal permission right then and there. It would have cost at least \$5,000 to dig it up after they had started compacting, and over \$10,000 if they would have to dig up the roadway according to the supervisor.

Darrell called the Well digger immediately after he got off the phone, and told him Granite Construction was going to trench and lay a 12 inch main under their roadbed, and mark the ends. The well company owner thought the 12 inch main was a little overkill, but it was their money. He said they had located a perfect site for a deep aquifer well, and had a 50,000 gallon tank in stock that someone had decided they didn't want. He'd sell him the 50,000 gallon tank for the same price as the 10,000 gallon tank, and they wouldn't have to wait a month to get the 10,000 tank manufactured. Darrell jumped on it immediately. He knew a good deal when he heard one. Darrell asked him about shipping costs, and he said the costs were the same straight down the line. Darrell asked about the pump house. He advised the owner to make it big enough not only to hold all the water equipment, but a battery rack and inverter big enough to run the pump and equipment easily, and he wanted Thin film PV panels on the roof, so make sure one side was facing directly south. The owner told Darrell that would increase their costs, but he could do it. Darrell told him to send him a revised quote including the bigger building, 50K gallon tank and the 12 inch pipe. He asked the well company owner where he could buy some rural style hydrants for fire fighting. He told Darrell that he could get them from the same company as the pipe. Darrell said they would need 12 of them. 1 for the office, one for the hangar, and one for each of the home sites, except they only needed to install 7 of them, since the other 5 home sites weren't going to be occupied yet. He changed his mind and told him to install all 12 - they still needed to fight fires even if there wasn't a house there. That way, they would have the whole property plumbed with mains, and would only need to bring water from the main to the individual houses. The owner of the well company liked doing business with people like Darrell who did things right the first time - less headache for him.

Darrell called Jim to give him the updates. Jim told Darrell he had located a good price on a 5,000sf steel building, and a steel building big enough to easily hold the Twin Commander and all the equipment they needed. Jim told him how much they would cost, and Darrell approved, it was half what he thought it would cost. Darrell asked when they would be installed, and Jim said he would get back to him. Darrell explained the Computer Company needed to know when the shell was up on the big building so they could run the cable. It was much cheaper to run cable before the wallboard went up. Jim thought that was an excellent idea and made a note to check. Everything else was on line, and the contract should be awarded any day now for the programming contract. Darrell asked about the PV roofing, and Jim told him that the manufacturer had already substituted a laminated roofing with the PV panels on the Southern exposure. It seems that the PV manufacturer also could laminate the panels to standard metal roofing material as well as composite asphalt roofing. Jim said the price quoted included the

panels. Darrell was shocked - that was a great bargain! The controllers, battery banks and inverters were extra of course. Jim said it would be cheaper to buy a separate battery building instead of a 5,000 square foot basement. Darrell agreed, and thanked Jim for thinking ahead. Darrell knew he could order the inverters, controllers, and racks from a new company called OutBack Power Systems.

Darrell asked Jim if he needed anything else, and he said not right now. He said goodbye, and Darrell called the modular housing manufacturer and got an update. They were still on schedule. No sooner had he hung up then Steve called. They sold their house, and he was almost finished with his pilot training. Jim had approved the lease contract, and as soon as he had his FAA commercial ticket, he was getting type rated in the Twin Commander at the same time courtesy of the leasing company. Steve said he really needed a co-pilot, and asked Darrell how he'd like to learn how to fly. Darrell always was more comfortable when he was driving, so he thought he would feel the same when he was flying, so he agreed. Steve told him he would pick him up tomorrow, and they'd go to the FAA training facility. He'd spend time in the simulator, and take a written test before they would give him a Student Pilot certificate. With his SP, he could act as a copilot until he got his FAA Pilot cert. While the Twin Commander was a dual control craft, the co-pilot served more like a flight engineer and navigator than a pilot unless the pilot was disabled or needed a break, since the autopilot was perfectly capable of flying the plane, even in IFR conditions.

The next morning, Steve was at their house at 8:00 sharp "Ready to go Darrell?" Darrell kissed Jackie, and was out the door. They drove to the flight training center, and after signing his life away, they stuck Darrell in a simulator with a Instructor/Controller running the simulator. After an hour or so, Darrell was getting the hang of it, and really enjoying himself. He practiced landings and take-offs as well as basic maneuvers. When he finished 3 hours in the simulator, they gave him a thick manual to study, and they told him to come back when he was ready to take the test. They figured they would see Darrell back in a couple of weeks, but didn't realize that Steve and Darrell were alike in more ways than one, they both had Genius IQ's and photographic memories. Darrell came back a week later and passed his FAA Student test the first time with a score of 95%. They handed him his FAA student cert, and scheduled the required hours of stick time so he could get his FAA pilot's cert. He explained they were moving to Winnemucca in 2 weeks, and the center said they had someone in Winnemucca who worked for them that could take over. Darrell was walking 6 inches off the ground when he left.

In the meantime, Jackie was getting more and more stuff packed, and Darrell was staying on top of the progress at their building site. One day he got a call from Jim "Darrell - guess what?"

"What now Jim."

"This will improve your mood - you won the contract! I already signed for the corporation. As soon as you can get started, they want you to get going on the project."

Darrell's Rebel Yell brought Jackie on the run "What the heck is going on! I didn't know you knew how to yell like that?"

"One of my buddies at school was from Texas and taught us all one night at a Frat party. We won the contract!!! Let's go out tonight and celebrate. I need to call the board and give them the good news!"

Darrell gave Jackie a big hug and a kiss, then got on the phone. Steve was overjoyed, as were the other board members. Two wives were still giving their husbands a hassle, but they told them they meant what they said, either move to Nevada with them, or talk to a divorce attorney - they weren't staying in California, especially since they had sold their houses and now they had the contract. They decided that discretion was the better part of valor, and shut up. Jackie had pegged them earlier as a couple of gold-digging bimbos, but didn't tell Darrell. In hindsight, that might not have been a good idea, since they could still cause problems for the company. What the husbands didn't tell their gold digging wives was they divested most of their assets into the LLC and were untouchable if the stupid bimbos decided to go through with it. Jim had suggested that they do what they did when one of them called him asking for advice after the first board meeting. He'd called his good friend, and they both followed Jim's advice. It would take a very sharp lawyer, and a ton of money to get at their assets.

Chapter 19

Darrell got a call the next day from Jim. Granite Construction called and told him the telephone and power lines were in, and the road was in good enough shape to start hauling stuff down it, and they would come back in a week, and lay reinforcing mat and pave the runway. Jim told him that he had already called the housing manufacturer, and the trucks were rolling. The basements were already in, and the supports were good to go. The water company would come over there today and drill the other well and install the piping and tank. Jim said that the contract for the water might be a little higher than originally estimated if they ran into hard water, or other complications, since they would have to add expensive filtration equipment to the system, and build an even bigger building.

The housing manufacturer's setup team would be responsible for connecting each house to the electric and phone, Jim said the Propane Company was willing to give them a 10,000 gallon propane tank instead of 10 1000-gallon tanks since it would be easier to fill and less trips for them. They would absorb the cost of the extra plumbing. Darrell thought it was an excellent idea, and asked if they could co-locate the propane tank with the Jet Fuel and the Diesel, joking that if he went out with a bang, he wanted it to be a huge bang! Jim failed to see the humor in that, but kept his mouth shut. He told Darrell that the Steel building company was trucking the components to their site along with a lightweight crane to help erect the buildings. Darrell reminded Jim he needed a day or two advance warning to get the computer company in there when the shell was up to install cables. Jim made a note of it. Darrell asked Jim if there were anything else. Jim said not now, but he would call with any developments. He told Darrell that it would take about a week once the modular housing sections were on site to get them set and hooked up, then another week to get them inspected and get the certificate of occupancy. That would mean they would only need to spend a few nights in a hotel, if that. Darrell thanked Jim and hung up.

He got on the internet, and looked up OutBack Systems, and left an e-mail for their system designer with what they wanted to do. A few hours later, he got an e-mail back with suggestions, and the name of a nearby dealer to install it. Darrell cc'd the dealer with his previous letter, and Outback's response. The dealer said he could match those prices and beat them, and he could install everything. Darrell e-mailed him back and said that the batteries and inverters were going in a basement for the houses, and in a separate building for the office and hangar. Darrell had the brilliant idea that since the 2 buildings were so close together, they could share a utilities building, saving room in the hangar. He told the dealer the thin-film PV panels were already installed on the roofs of the buildings, and all he had to do was connect them to the OutBack equipment. He mentioned wind turbines, and the dealer tried to sell him a huge Bergey wind turbine. Darrell did his homework, and realized for the cost of 1 Bergey plus installation and a 100 foot tower, he could get 10 or 20 Wind 403x smaller turbines, and have similar output, with a slower start-up speed, and cheaper maintenance. He suggested the same to the dealer, and realizing the winds in Winnemucca can be extremely variable, agreed. He

even had the 50-foot towers that the manufacturer recommended in stock. Darrell asked him to e-mail him a quote. The dealer said he would have it by tomorrow.

Darrell was trying to think of what he was forgetting when Steve called - that was it, the plane. Steve told him that he had his FAA commercial twin engine, and was going to get type-certified that week by the Aircraft leasing company. Steve reminded Darrell that he needed to go to Winnemucca and put in the stick time to get his Private Pilot's license, and then to call the leasing agency with his license number. As soon as he hung up, Darrell phoned the Winnemucca office of the flying school, and made arrangements to get his stick time so he could get his Private license. He talked to Jackie, and she said she could finish up here, and if he needed to relocate to Winnemucca early, he could. He called the school back, and they had an opening 2 days from then. He then called Jim to find out where he could stay for a week so he could get his private pilot's license. Jim immediately offered him and Jackie their guest bedroom, since their oldest kids were away at college for a couple more months. Darrell thanked Jim, and told Jackie he needed to leave tomorrow, and anything she needed him for needed to get done today. Jackie handed him a list of stuff she had printed, and he got started. After dinner, he disassembled his computer and packed it in the boxes. They had decided he was going to drive the CRV and she'd take the F-250 since she might need to haul a trailer, so he packed his computer stuff and a suitcase full of clothes in the Honda CRV. Jackie handed him a backpack, and told him to make room for it, then handed him a half dozen 2-liter bottles of water, and 1 that was frozen. He packed them all in his vehicle without complaint. He had learned to trust Jackie's judgment. When they were finished, they took showers, laid down and even though they were tired, made love since it might be two weeks before they saw each other.

Darrell woke up and made breakfast, and Jackie woke up when she smelled the coffee. She'd have to remember to set the coffee maker from now on, or she might sleep to noon! Darrell felt badly for leaving early, but Jackie assured him that she could handle what was left, and he was needed in Winnemucca. When he wasn't flying, he could be keeping track of the project. She reminded Darrell that the first thing he needed to do when he got into town was set up Cellular service for the corporation, and to get 6 phones for now. Darrell left early in the morning, and wound up fighting traffic until he got east of the San Francisco area. He had smooth sailing until he reached Sacramento because he was going the opposite way of rush hour. Darrell wondered when the traffic would get bad enough that Caltrans would decide to go with flex lanes, and designate center lanes as traffic indicated. In a way, he was glad they were leaving California, and he was also sad. He'd miss the beaches, sunsets, and the year-round sun. He was definitely sure he wouldn't miss the traffic and smog! He caught some more traffic as he approached Sacramento, and it cleared out as he passed through. He stopped in Grass Valley to get some gas and stretch his legs. That was another thing he wouldn't miss - Gas Prices!

He got back into the CRV for the prettiest part of the trip, up and over the Sierra Nevadas. Since he was in no hurry, and probably wouldn't drive here again, stopped in Truckee and saw the Donner Pass memorial and museum. Darrell thought they were nuts - their extreme desire to get to California as fast as possible doomed $\frac{3}{4}$ of their party to freezing and starvation when

there was plenty of food, water, and grass for their animals in Washoe Valley on the eastern side of the pass. He got back in the CRV, and drove to a restaurant someone had recommended in Truckee and had lunch. When he finished, he got back into the car and drove down the hill to Reno. He liked this part - his gas mileage went through the roof since it was all downhill, and the engine basically idled for 50 miles. If he had a hybrid vehicle, the batteries would be charging due to the long steep downgrade. He saw signs advising trucks and commercial vehicles to use lower gears. He drove through Reno, and got out at the same gas station they stopped in at Sparks the last time they came through, but this time, he filled up again. He would have enough gas to make it from here to Winnemucca without stopping. He should be there in about 3 hours.

As he headed back out, he noticed he was climbing again, then the road leveled off and dropped as he climbed out of the Washoe Valley into the Nevada Great Basin. From there to Winnemucca, the only scenery was the distant mountains, since the desert was flat and featureless, a classic salt pan. 3 hours later he arrived exhausted in Winnemucca, drove to Jim's office, and since he wasn't too busy, volunteered to go with Darrell to the Cellular service company. They were nice, but Ron was surprised at the price, it was double what he paid in California. Jim explained that the lack of competition in Nevada, and the huge distances involved, made Cellular service expensive. Since the Manager knew Jim personally, they authorized 6 phones immediately with 1,000 minutes per month, and free evenings and weekends, as well as free long distance and voice mail. The manager even programmed Darrell's phone for him including the voice mail. Darrell recorded his own message, and the manager had him punch in a passcode for voicemail retrieval, and showed him how to retrieve messages. Then he handed him a pamphlet with all the information he needed. When they were finished, Jim took Darrell to his house, and helped him unload the CRV, and then had Darrell drive him back to the office for his vehicle. Darrell followed Jim home, he was too tired to remember it well. When they got home, Darrell crashed in the guest bedroom, dead on his feet. Later that evening, he called Jackie from his cell phone, and gave her the cell number. When he hung up, he plugged the phone into the charger, and remembered to bring the Cigarette Lighter Adapter with him tomorrow when he went to the airport to keep the battery charged. He walked into the kitchen, and Jim left a note on the refrigerator that he had left Darrell a chicken salad sandwich in the refrigerator. Darrell ate the sandwich with a glass of iced tea and went back to bed.

The next morning, Darrell grabbed a bagel and a cup of coffee, and headed to the airport. After he checked in and signed his life away, the Instructor met him and escorted him to the trainer, a Cessna 172. They had to take off in the morning, since the altitude of Winnemucca combined with the summer heat produced a problem called "density altitude" that made it impossible for underpowered light planes like the Cessna 172 to take off during the heat of the day. The pilot and Darrell did the walk around, and got into the aircraft. He showed Darrell where all the instruments were, and things started coming back to him from his reading. They spent the rest of the day flying with Darrell taking the controls more and more. When they ran low on fuel, the pilot landed the plane, and refueled, and back into the air they went. Darrell had 2 weeks to

get his private Pilot license. At the end of the day, he had performed most of the basic maneuvers, but he had yet to land or take off. The instructor didn't think the conditions were safe enough for a student. He told Darrell to be there at first light tomorrow, and he would take off and then do some touch-and-gos before landing the plane. When they were finished, Darrell stopped at a diner he had seen on the way in. While the food was nothing to write home about, it was good. He called Jackie on the way home, and took a shower, then went to bed when he got home. He set his alarm for 5:00 and went to sleep.

The alarm went off at 5:00, and he shut it off quickly so he wouldn't wake the rest of the house, got dressed, ate a bagel and drank a cup of coffee, climbed into the CRV and drove to the airport. He got there just as the sun was fully up, and the instructor was chomping at the bit. They walked quickly to the plane, did a walk-around, then the Instructor started the engine and taxied to the runway. He turned the controls over to Darrell. "Remember, pull back gently on the yoke at 65 knots, and once you are 100 feet up and going faster than 85 knots, retract the flaps. Darrell did just that, and they were flying. As soon as he was flying straight and level, the instructor told Darrell to turn around and return to the airport, it was time for 3 touch and goes and then a full landing. Darrell performed the touch and goes flawlessly, then lined up for the landing. If it would have been a carrier, he would have caught the 4 wire, not bad, but not perfect. He turned around again, and got ready to take-off. The instructor told Darrell to go ahead, and he cranked the flaps to 20 degrees, and then shoved the throttle to full, and gave it some right rudder to compensate for the torque of the engine, what little there was. A few seconds later, he was off and flying. He retracted the flaps at 85 knots and 100 feet, then flew straight and level waiting for the instructor's next command. He had Darrell practicing everything he did the previous day, with steeper banks until he got it right. It usually only took a couple of tries until Darrell had it down pat.

Later that afternoon, they landed, and the pilot told Darrell to be there first thing tomorrow for some more abuse. Darrell had to laugh. As soon as he was back in the car, he turned the air condition on, and called Jim. Everything was proceeding as planned. Darrell told Jim he had some time to kill, and was going to visit the property. First he filled up in town, then drove down the ranch road to their property. What he saw amazed him. The buildings were almost up, and the houses were on their foundations. He met with the contractor's supervisors, introduced himself, and asked for an update. The big steel building they were going to make into an office would have the shell up tomorrow afternoon. Darrell asked if anyone had called the computer company. When they admitted they hadn't, he called Jim and asked him if he had. He told Darrell that they were going to be there tomorrow. Darrell asked about the water, and Jim said they were waiting for the lab report. He said it should be in this afternoon. Jim gave him the driller's number. Darrell called, and the owner said he just got the report, and everything was OK. The tank, pump house and pipes would be delivered and installed tomorrow. All in all, Darrell was pleased.

He called Jackie and gave her the good news. Jackie was glad, but extremely busy, since she had a week before they had to be out. Darrell walked around, checking things out. He noticed

none of the Alternative Energy equipment had been delivered, then he remembered that they were the last scheduled crew before the computers were installed. The last time Darrell replied to their e-mailed quote, he doubled the recommended number of batteries, since they had to have power for the computer, or they were dead in the water. The houses could all get by with a basic 100KW Grid-sync Inverter and a 12-hour battery bank, but the office needed a 24-hour bank to be on the safe side. He had also ordered a 20kW diesel generator as a backup. It would feed the ranch's entire grid in the event of grid failure, and total battery drain in the main power room. The extra power would charge the battery banks of the other houses. Darrell figured he would never need it, with the wind and solar generators, but he always erred on the cautious side. When he finished his inspection, he packed it up, drove to town to try and locate a better restaurant. He found something that looked promising, but all the restaurants seemed to be serving red meat - weren't there any Environmentally friendly restaurants in Winnemucca.

Perplexed, Darrell called Jim, who laughed his head off. "Guess you missed that little fact in your research. Nevada is called Cowboy Country - if you do find a chicken in Winnemucca, I can guarantee it is probably fried. Don't worry about these cattle. They raise cattle the old-fashioned way out here - free range grazing. They almost never see a feedlot. If you avoid Choice and Select meat, I can guarantee you that cow was never in a feedlot."

Darrell was mystified, but felt better about eating meat out here. He still despised feed lots, and intensive pig farming, and he would never eat veal. He may have become a Survivalist, but still held to some ideas that PETA would have approved of. After much soul searching, he walked into the nearest Basque restaurant. Basque shepherds and cattlemen had settled a large part of rural Nevada, and most restaurants specialized in Basque food. Basques served every edible part of the cow, from nose to tail. Tongue was considered a delicacy, and oxtails were made into soup. Even the tripe was served. Basques were the most Frugal cooks in Europe. They didn't waste anything. Darrell sat down and perused the menu, and ordered a Ribeye steak with the trimmings. Trimmings in a Basque restaurant include things like soup, salad, French fries, bread, and sometimes spaghetti. After all this food, they dropped a 14-oz ribeye on his plate. Darrell realized if he ate at Basque restaurants any more, he had better take up jogging, or not eating breakfast or lunch! He filled up several "doggie bags" with the leftovers, and tipped the waitress generously, then made his way back to the car. When he got home, Jim asked him about dinner. Darrell admitted what they served 1 person in a Basque restaurant would feed an entire San Francisco bistro. Ron laughed, and told Darrell the portions of sides were really designed for two people, since most of the time, couples or foursomes ate at a Basque restaurant. Darrell asked about all the old men eating at the restaurant. Jim explained they were retired Basque Shepherds that either roomed above the restaurant, or in a nearby building, and ate dinner family style every night. It was a Basque tradition.

Chapter 20

After 2 weeks of intensive flight training, Darrell soloed. He wasn't the best pilot in the world, but good enough to pass the license test, which was all he needed. The IP signed off on his application, and he forwarded the fee to the FAA. He would get his license in the mail in a week or so. Meanwhile Jackie had been packing like a maniac, and finally the movers showed up. They packed everything she had boxed up, all the furniture and everything she didn't want to take herself into a cargo truck, and even with 2 trips was faster than loading an 18-wheeler. Jackie had room in the back of the truck, so she loaded some personal stuff, and most of her emergency gear into the back of the pickup, and covered it with a tarp, then strapped the tarp down securely. With a 70mph speed limit on I-80 in Nevada, she didn't want anything blowing away. Jackie called Darrell on his cell phone, and told him the house was empty, and the movers had come and gone. Darrell said the house would be ready for occupation in a couple of days, and Jim had offered to let them stay in their guest room since the kids were away in college. Jackie was happy about that, since the security in most of those older hotels in Winnemucca was virtually non-existent. She hit the road, and made it to Winnemucca later that afternoon. She was as exhausted as Darrell had been, and even as glad as she was to see Darrell, she fell asleep 5 seconds after her head hit the pillow.

The steel buildings were already up, the Computer Company had installed all the cabling, and the water company had installed the tank, pumping equipment, and piped the entire property including 12 hydrants. Darrell had gotten on the Internet and ordered a fire-fighting trailer with a 500 gallon tank, a huge high-power diesel powered pump, and 100 feet of reel fire hose, as well as several hundred feet of draft hose to connect to the hydrants, and all the hardware to couple to the hydrants. The entire trailer fully loaded weighed 10,000 pounds and the F-250 could pull it easily since it was designed for off-road travel.

As the houses were set up, they were connected to the utilities. As soon as they were done, they called the county for an inspection for a Certificate of occupancy. Darrell had arranged an insurance policy for the entire complex, including all risks, and also insured all vehicles and structures. It was expensive, but worth it. Several days later, Darrell got a call that the CofO had been issued. He called the moving company, and they could be there in 2 days. He gave the moving company directions to his house, as well as his cell number. Jackie was enthusiastic, she wanted to be in their new home. 2 days later, the moving van arrived, and told Darrell they were about ½ hour out, so they drove to their new house, unlocked everything, and decided where everything should go. Actually, Jackie decided, and Darrell stayed out of her way unless she asked him a question. Most decisions were a no-brainer, since the bedroom furniture went in the Master bedroom, and there was only one way the bed would easily fit. The huge living room was their only problem. Finally Jackie decided to orient the furniture to take advantage of the view. Meanwhile, Darrell prowled around his new kitchen. Jackie had gone all out, everything was top-notch commercial quality, from the stove/range, to the huge hood with 2 powerful ventilation fans and a Halon fire suppression setup. They had a huge upright

freezer and an equally huge refrigerator. Across the kitchen was a huge work area for cooking and baking. Darrell loved to make homemade bread whenever he had time. Since he worked within walking distance of home, he would have more time. The spa was due to be delivered in the next couple of days. They had already stubbed out the electrical and water connections, including a drain to the septic system so they could drain the spa whenever they felt like it by turning a valve. The screen room was perfect, and the only thing it was missing was the barbeque. The Propane Company had even stubbed out a connection for propane for the barbeque so he wouldn't have to use bottled propane. Jackie had ordered a new stainless steel barbeque, and it would be delivered about the time the spa was scheduled to arrive.

The builders were still busy setting up the other homes, so Steve and the other board members would be moved in by the end of the month. The steel building crew was working like beavers on speed getting the interiors up in the office building. Darrell had ordered office furniture and was waiting for the walls to be insulated, covered and painted, then the carpets laid before ordering the shipment of the office furniture and the computer system.

Jim had been busy interviewing employees for the new business. He needed a secretary/receptionist that had better qualifications than looks, since all the men were happily married. He wound up hiring a 40-year old ex-legal secretary who wanted a change. Jim thought that Legal training might come in handy. She could type, file, and answer phones, and was extremely intelligent. She would be one very busy lady in the coming weeks. The board had decided to convert the extra acreage to farming and ranching for now, since the other 40 acres wouldn't be needed for housing. Darrell had purchased a used Kubota diesel tractor over the internet from Idaho, and it would be there soon. It had a bucket front loader, and all the accessories, including attachments for a backhoe, post hole auger, and all the farming implements. He needed someone to run it, and Jim suggested a Mexican family in town. They had lived on a ranch all their lives, and were looking for a new place since their ranch had been sold by the owners. Darrell thought they could put up a house for them and still have 38 acres to use. The rest of the board agreed, and they were offered the job. Manuel had two teenage sons that worked with him when they weren't in school, and his wife Maria was an excellent cook. Darrell wanted to learn how to cook authentic Mexican food, since he didn't have the time before, but loved Mexican food. They ordered a 1500 square foot home with 3 bedrooms and two baths for them, and had it delivered later that month. Jim had finally taken care of the fuel deliveries, and all 3 tanks were full. As soon as the buildings were finished, Darrell called the Computer Company, and they installed the computer system the next day. It took them the rest of the week to get everything hooked up, tested, and re-tested. The biggest headache was the Microwave relay. The security system was too good, and caused problems. They finally called the manufacturer, and Darrell had a talk with the design programmer, and found a bug in the source code. They immediately wrote a patch, and offered Darrell a 50% discount, or \$2,500 off, on the software for locating the bug. Naturally he accepted. He wasn't a cheapskate any more, but still knew the value of a buck!

Jackie had insisted on a top-notch security system for each house, and the office, with an auto-

dialing 5-watt cell phone that called 911 with a pre-recorded message for either police/fire/ambulance. The front and back doors were specially made high security doors, and the entire perimeter was protected with motion detecting floodlights. After they were there a while, the local FBI office paid a visit since they were a government contractor, and the agent made some more suggestions. Jackie took extensive notes, and agreed with most of the suggestions. She thought the minefield was a bit too much, until she realized he was kidding her! One thing she was glad he mentioned was the lack of a defensive armory. After all they were more than an hour out of town, and didn't have anything more lethal than a Popsicle to defend themselves with. He knew Jackie carried a CCW, but 7 rounds of 45 ammo wasn't enough. Jackie asked if he could put those recommendations in writing. She knew that if the FBI wanted them to have some firepower, Darrell wouldn't argue. She was already mentally making a shopping list! She wanted a half-dozen Bushmaster HBAR AR-15's with 10 20-round magazines each and a C-More red-dot sight mounted. She figured even these Sheeple programmers could figure out that if you put the red dot on the target and pulled the trigger, the target would go down. She wanted an AR-10T with a 3x12x50 scope. As flat as things were around there, she could use the extra range of the .308 round. She'd recommend the KEL-TEC SU-16 for a truck gun since it used the same magazines as the AR-15, and folded in half. She'd make up 72-hour kits for all the vehicles, as well as fanny pack emergency kits. Any of the Sheeple that got with the program, she would help get a CCW.

Her NV CCW showed up in the mail, and she was amazed there was no restriction as to how many guns she could put on it. She always wanted a Para Ord P-14, since the Glock only carried 7 rounds, but it had the advantage of being easy to conceal from the PC Police. More than one California CCW holder had lost his permit when someone complained about a "man with a gun". Getting used to Nevada's gun laws would take a while. Just realizing that 2/3 of the people she met might either be packing or legally carrying a gun in their vehicle was a real shock. She did notice one thing - Nevada drivers were much more polite - evidently having a gun in every vehicle had it's benefits. One thing she could do immediately was to start carrying a concealed folder. Her Emerson CQC would fit the bill nicely. It had been given to her as a gift from a student when her training had saved her life. She had connections, and the next week, Jackie had an Original Ernie Emerson CQC in the mail with a note from the student. There was no serial number, just Ernie's logo. Jackie treasured the knife so much that she never carried it in California, since some over-zealous cop would have confiscated it in a heartbeat.

Later that day, they had the entire house at least semi-organized, and the computer hooked up. Darrell nearly swore when he realized that Winnemucca didn't have DSL connections for his home computer. He called Jim and he told Darrell that if he wanted DSL connections in Winnemucca, the only game in town was Direct TV's Directway. Darrell had a better idea.. If he ran some CAT 6 Ethernet cable from the houses to the office computer, they could use the Microwave relay for high-speed internet access when it wasn't being used for FTP transfers of data. He called the Computer Company, and spoke to the owner. He knew exactly what Darrell wanted, and said the connection was easy, the labor would be running the cable. He asked if he was interested in a wireless connection. He could hook an antenna to the building, and a

hub/router setup to allow sharing of the microwave setup. It would only cost a few thousand to set up the connection as a wireless, or 5 thousand to hardwire the connection due to the extra labor. Darrell explained that the radio link needed to be encrypted, just in case. The dealer said he had a setup with 1024-bit encryption with extended range to cover the entire ranch. Darrell asked him how fast they could get the wireless setup, and he told Darrell they could install it tomorrow. He had the equipment in stock. Darrell told him to send him a quote, he'd review it and send it back that afternoon with a Purchase Order.

The next day, the owner of the Computer Company showed up to install the wireless connection, and Darrell met him for the first time. The owner immediately suggested a brilliant idea. For security reasons, they should not allow access to the mainframe from the wireless network, since all the information on the mainframe was classified Secret or above. Darrell agreed, and the owner installed the wireless network, and handed Darrell a dozen wireless network interface cards with the 1024 bit encryption chips. As soon as Darrell got off work, he went home, and installed the wireless NIC. It worked like a charm. His connection to the internet was even faster than his DSL connection. It was operating at the max speed the buss could transmit data to the NIC. Since he was the only one using it, he had full access to the microwave relay system without having to share.

The next day Steve showed up with the rest of the Board. Since their houses were done, they wanted to get to work. Their wives could handle coordinating the movers, so they all flew the Twin Commander from California to Winnemucca. The first Darrell knew about their arrival was when he heard the Aviation radio for the first time on their frequency. "Winnemucca Systems on final" His secretary flipped the flight ops switch on the light, stopping anyone from using the runway for a roadway until the plane was landed and in the hangar. Darrell walked out to meet them after they had landed. Jackie heard the plane, and walked over to get the wives situated. When they had all deplaned, Darrell invited them into the building and showed them around, then they met in the meeting room. They all discussed the project, and had a working flowchart by the end of the day, and all the assignments. Each person would work on part of the code. They had 18 months to deliver, and they thought they could deliver the debugged and compiled code in 12 months. That was part of the reason they had won the contract, and they were also the low bidder.

The wives were aghast at the desolation of the desert. One of their first cracks about no Starbucks almost made Jackie draw down and cap the bimbos right then and there. After all, there was plenty of desert to bury the bodies in. Once they saw the inside of their houses, they quickly shut up. They couldn't have afforded as nice of a house in California, and they knew it. Several hours later, the moving vans showed up, and Jackie was busier than a one-armed paper hanger coordinating everything. At the end of the day, she was wishing her spa had been delivered.

The next morning, everyone met at the office, and Darrell had coffee and bagels ready for them. They would meet every morning for between 30 minutes and an hour to keep everyone

on the same page, and solve any problems. Then they each retired to their offices and went to work. Later that morning, the barbeque and the spa showed up at the same time. Jackie had the guys drop the barbeque off and connect the gas first, since they could be in and out in 15 minutes. Then the guys brought the spa in. It barely fit through the openings, but they got it in place, and hooked up. Jackie treated them to sandwiches and sodas. She really needed to go shopping, so she took the CRV into town, and came back later with a couple of weeks worth of groceries. She realized she needed to make a Costco run. She walked over to the office and asked Darrell if she could go to Reno tomorrow and take the truck. Since Darrell wasn't using it - he was stuck in the office for the duration, he said OK. Later that evening he had a brainstorm. The other board members didn't have vehicles, since they had sold theirs and flown over. He got their permission to make a fleet purchase of F-250 diesels like theirs. The board members immediately agreed, and he located a dealer in Reno that had 6 of them in stock. They were lease returns. Darrell remembered his last problem, and decided to spend the extra money on new trucks. The dealer said he had brand new trucks in stock for \$10 thousand more each. Darrell haggled a little on the price, got him to throw in the BFG KO All Terrain tires including a spare. Darrell said that they would take delivery of 4 of them this afternoon. The dealer said they would be ready. Darrell asked Jackie if she would mind driving the board members' wives down to Reno. Jackie looked like she'd rather crawl naked across broken glass, then remembered Steve's wife Susan would be with them, and she could ignore the three bimbos by sitting them in the back of the truck together. If she had her way, they would be riding in the bed! Maybe she'd get lucky and they would get lost on the way home!

The next day, Jackie loaded the bimbos into the back of the truck, but restrained herself from telling them to get in the bed. Jackie asked Steve's wife Susan to sit up front with her. Since the front seats were buckets, the 3 bimbos had to ride in the back seat. Luckily for Jackie, they talked among themselves all the way, and didn't bother her. When she did converse it was with Susan. 3 long hours later, they arrived in Reno. Jackie pulled into the dealership, and there were 4 brand new white Ford F-250's all parked together with brand new BFG KO All-Terrain tires. The manager came out to meet her, and Jackie went over the vehicles with a fine tooth comb. Just like he promised, they were brand-new vehicles with less than 25 miles on the odometer, and both tanks were full of diesel, and the spare had been changed to a BFG All-Terrain. Jackie took out her corporate check book and wrote one of the largest checks she had written in her life. The manager's eyes were as big as saucers. Then he went in back, came out a few minutes later with 4 contracts all made out to Winnemucca Systems, and 8 sets of keys. Jackie had photocopied 4 sets of directions back to the ranch, gave 1 to Susan, and reluctantly gave the other 3 bimbos a copy. She told them that she was going shopping, and they needed to be back by dark, so don't take too long. After showing them how to start a diesel, she jumped in her truck and went to a gun dealer in Reno that she knew about. He had a Para Ord P-14 Limited in stock. When he took it out of the box, it was the brushed stainless model with a matte finish. It came with 2 14-round mags and he had 2 more mags for it for \$30 each. He was discounting his mags since the AWB was due to sunset in a month, and he didn't want to have to sell these mags for \$10.00 each like the distributors were telling him. 2 months ago, he could have gotten \$60.00 each for them. He also had a Desantis shoulder holster for it with a

double mag carrier on the off-side. Jackie said that if he could make it fit, she'd take it, as well as a Bladetech IWB and a double mag Kydex carrier. He checked, and sure enough he had one in stock. Jackie tried on the Desantis, and he helped her fit the holster, being very careful not to bump into her breasts. When she got it fitted, it would disappear under a blazer like it never was there. She took the Desantis holster off since she wasn't wearing a jacket, and slid the gun into the Bladetech, then bought 100 rounds of Cor-Bon 200gr JHP flying ashcan rounds, and 200 rounds of Winchester 230gr FMJ white box ammo.

When she was finished, she asked him how much for the whole shooting match.

He made her a very reasonable offer, so she took out her Nevada CCW, and wrote a check for the amount. She got out the door for less than \$1,00.00, but just barely. Since she had a CCW, there was no wait for the background check, and she took the entire package, loaded the mags, and inserted a fresh mag into the gun, cycled the action, activated the safety, dropped the mag and topped it off, then reloaded the mag. She stuck the gun in the IWB holster, and carefully slid the holster between her body and her pants, and when the lips of the clip engaged the bottom of her belt, she knew the gun was secure, and adjusted her belt, then attached the mag carrier to the other side. The only things that stuck above the belt line were the butt of the .45 and the baseplates of the magazines. She fixed that by untucking her shirt. With her shirt untucked and hanging over her beltline, no one knew she was carrying. Luckily she was wearing a shirt that worked untucked. Her next stop was the shooting range to verify the gun shot to point of aim, or else she would adjust the sights.

She stopped at the range, paid for an hour, picked up her earmuffs and eye protection, and a bunch of B-27 silhouette targets, then carried everything to her lane. She unloaded all 4 mags, cycled the action and caught the round in the chamber, then reloaded with FMJ ammo. When she was finished, she ran a B-27 out to the 15 yard line, holstered her Para-Ord, then drew and double-tapped the target, and re-holstered. She did that 7 times, and then hit the switch to retrieve her target. All 14 rounds were well centered, but 3 inches low. She walked out front with her target, asked the owner if he had a set of Trijicon night sights with a lower rear sight. He suggested putting a standard lower rear in first, since once a set of Trijicon sights were mounted, he couldn't sell them as new. He'd loan her the rear sight until she figured out which rear sight she wanted. Jackie thought that was a good idea, and he quickly replaced the sights, and gave her the tool to adjust it left and right. She went back to her lane, ran out a fresh target, and loaded a new magazine. She fired 2 shots, they were centered vertically, but right. She drifted the rear sight slightly to the left and fired two more. Both rounds hit dead center bullseye. She stopped shooting, walked back outside and told the owner to match the height of these sights exactly with a set of Trijicon night sights. 15 minutes later, the Trijicon sights were mounted, and he handed her the gun back. She went back to her lane, loaded a fresh mag, and ran a fresh target out to the 15 yard line, holstered the gun, drew and double tapped the target, and repeated it 7 times. When she retrieved the target, all 14 rounds were in the x-ring. The owner of the range walked over and introduced himself, then took a look at her target "Ma'am, how would you like to work here as an Instructor?"

Jackie had to laugh in spite of herself. “Sam, I used to be a NRA instructor in California until I moved to Winnemucca with my husband’s computer business. Otherwise I might be interested.”

“Tell you what, If you want to come into town one day a month, I wanted to run an all-women class, but I never had a good female instructor.”

Jackie told him she’d have to think about it and get back to him. He gave her his card, and told her to call him. She knew he was all-business, but had an uneasy feeling about him, like his interest might be more than business. She decided to pass on the offer, but didn’t tell him. She decided to cut her range time short and pay for the sights and go shopping at Costco. He billed her cost on the sights, and she didn’t complain, but suspected she was being hit on. She decided she needed to find a new range. When she had driven a safe distance, she tossed the business card out the window. She went to Costco and spent 2 hours buying enough food for them for the next 6 months. She thought she might stock up since the prices were so reasonable. They even had Starbucks brand coffee, so she bought extra for the other wives. She wished they gave case discounts, because she would have bought a case of coffee at that price. She didn’t buy any red meat, but bought an entire box of chicken. They had the IQF boneless breasts and thighs, and she bought a box of each. Their produce prices were pretty good too. When she got to the camping equipment, she had an idea and bought some stuff “Just for a rainy day”. When she got to the checkout lanes, she had a flat hand truck fully loaded, and she could barely move it. They repacked it into 2 carts and helped her out to the truck and helped her load it. When she was loading the truck, her shirt rode up, and the butt of her gun showed for a second. The clerk noticed and said “Nice Gun, I wanted to buy a P-14 but the Department won’t let Reservists buy non-authorized guns, so I had to get a S&W 9mm.” Jackie was embarrassed that her gun had gotten spotted, then realized her shirt had slid up almost to her belly button. She slid it down quickly, and asked him which department he worked for. “I work for Reno PD. I’ve been a reservist for 4 years, I’m waiting for a full-time position to open up.”

Jackie mentioned she saw a help-wanted sign in the Winnemucca Sheriff’s office.

“You know, I never thought about that - I’ve already graduated POST and I have 4 years experience as a Reservist. I wonder if I’d be eligible.”

“I know the Sheriff is a real nice guy. I walked in there a month ago with a California CCW, and he gave me a NV CCW.”

“Maybe I should check this out - I really don’t want to live in Reno, but it’s easiest to get hired in the big cities.”

Jackie said she had to go, and shook his hand and wished him luck. She drove the now fully loaded truck back to Winnemucca. She found out later from Darrell that the other 3 wives with the exception of Susan had spent the entire day shopping at Nordstrom’s buying clothes and

junk they didn't need. Susan was more sensible, and went to Costco and Wal-mart. Jackie really felt like capping the 3 bimbos when she heard that! She hoped their Sugar Daddy husbands would wake up and dump the bimbos for real women. She'd even help hide the bodies!

Chapter 21

The next morning, Jackie was surprised to hear the engines of the turboprop starting. She walked outside and saw 2 of the gold-digger wives boarding the aircraft with a suitcase apiece. Judging by the streaked makeup on their faces, they must have been crying. She walked back into the house and thought no more of it until Darrell came home that evening, and she asked Darrell what happened.

“Last night, when their husbands came home and saw all those Nordstrom’s bags, and spotted the receipts, they hit the ceiling. They both cut up all their wife’s credit cards, called the banks and credit card companies, and cancelled their joint credit cards. Their wives walked in on the proceedings, and tried to cry their way out of it. They weren’t buying it. From what I heard, they basically lowered the boom on them, they had been spending their husband’s money like water on shopping trips when they lived in California, going to thousand dollar a plate parties without them, rubbing elbows with the Hollywood crowd, and all without their husbands. One of their husbands hired a private detective, and got proof she was having multiple affairs. Anyway, they’re on their way back to California with the clothes on their backs and one suitcase a piece.”

“I guess they’ll file for divorce after this treatment?”

“Jackie, my partners were shrewd and both have pre-nuptial agreements in force. They’ll only get \$100,000 total as a divorce settlement - and get this... Their prenuptial agreements waive all legal fees and costs. If they contest, they only get \$50,000!”

“Darrell, I’d love to see the looks on their faces when the judges enforce the pre-nuptial agreements - especially the looks on their lawyer’s faces!”

“Darrell, what about the 3rd wife?”

“From what I can see, she has seen the error of her ways, and is returning the merchandise. She was friends with Susan, and I think she’s starting to have an influence on her now that the 2 gold-diggers are gone!”

2 weeks later in a California Divorce Court - Pre-trial Motions Hearing.

“Are all the parties present - very well let’s get this over with!”

The defendant’s attorney started “Your Honor, my client has some evidence to present to the court that would settle the entire case right now, and not use any more of the court’s valuable time.”

The judge said “Very well, proceed.”

The attorney took a huge expandable folder out of his briefcase and laid it on the judge’s bench. The top document was a pre-nuptial agreement signed 1 week after their engagement. The next document was an investigative report by a famous private investigator with pictures and negatives. The rest of the documents were notarized copies of receipts totaling over a million dollars for clothes and other luxuries from various California ultra-expensive boutiques from 1 week after their marriage 10 years ago, to 1 week before they left California. All the information was condensed onto a spreadsheet. The other document was copies of bank statements showing large and frequent cash withdrawals, with certified copies of withdrawal slips with the ex-wife’s signature on them. Over the 10 years, the spreadsheet showed the wife had spent over \$2 million dollars on herself.

“Your honor, California and Nevada both recognize prenuptial agreements that aren’t signed under duress. My signature appears on that document indicating I was the attorney of record. I explained the agreement thoroughly to both parties, and they both signed without comment. Since the document was signed within 1 week of engagement, there could be no claim of duress, since she could have called the whole thing off without any expense, or embarrassment. Also, as you can see from the report, there was ongoing marital infidelity from 1 year after the marriage to 1 month before they left for Nevada. Turning to the pictures, as you can see, 1 picture really does say 1,000 words. It shows the plaintiff naked in the arms of another man, and both faces are clearly visible, if counsel wishes to object, we have the negatives as well. We’re asking for summary judgment for the defendant, and enforcement of the pre-nuptial agreement.”

The judge turned to the plaintiff’s attorney “Any rebuttal - be brief.”

The plaintiff’s attorney knew he had lost - she hadn’t told him the whole story, he tried to bluster his way out, and it failed miserably! When he ran out of steam, the Judge reviewed the pre-nuptial and other evidence, then ruled in favor of the defendant. He ruled the pre-nuptial agreement was valid, there was no coercion, and there was overwhelming and very damning evidence of infidelity on the part of the plaintiff. He granted the defendant’s motion for summary judgment, and dismissed the parties. The defendant’s attorney handed the plaintiff’s attorney a certified check for \$50,000.00 and turned to leave. The defendant left as well - he was through forever with his gold-digging ex-wife. \$50,000 dollars was a drop in the bucket to him, and money well spent.

When they got back to the Ranch, they found out that both their divorces went the same - summary judgment for the defendant. The other husband didn’t have proof of infidelity, but the other judge was more conservative, and granted judgment based on the pre-nuptial agreement. They both felt glad to be rid of the albatross around their necks, and threw themselves into their work.

When Jackie got the FBI's security report -she showed it to Darrell. "Dear, it says here that the FBI thinks several things are lacking in our security, including a lack of defensive weapons. We're an hour out of Winnemucca, and basically defenseless, except for my pistol. Anyone with a shotgun could take the entire compound over, and kidnap any one of you. You have secrets in your heads that many people would pay good money for. The US Government has told us we need to improve our security. I've already taken care of most of it, but I need your approval to build and stock an armory."

"Jackie - by an Armory you mean guns!"

"Darrell, you can't stop a criminal, kidnapper or terrorist with kind words. Yes I'm talking guns, specifically 6 AR-15's."

"Aren't they illegal?"

"Not in Nevada, they're semiauto, meaning they can only fire 1 round at a time. And if I wanted a full-auto weapon in Nevada, all it means is some extra paperwork!"

Jackie could see Darrell was having a hard time with this. Decades of programming told him guns were evil and were only for killing. Well he was half-right - guns were for killing...The bad guys!

Jackie moved in close and threw an arm around Darrell's shoulders. "We're not in California or the big city anymore. We're in the middle of nowhere, and we are responsible for our own security. You have to think of the security of your employees and their spouses as well."

Darrell relented, "OK Jackie, do what you have to, but can you keep them under lock and key?"

"I was planning on buying a combination safe, and giving the combination to all the board members, so they could open it in an emergency. Anyone that wants one should have a CCW permit, and an Emergency kit in their vehicles."

"OK Jackie, take care of it, and thanks for asking me!" Darrell gave Jackie a big hug and kiss even though they were in his office. Jackie went home and called the Humboldt county Sheriff. When she got him on the phone, she asked him a couple of questions.

"Sheriff, this is Jackie Hayes. Fine - how are you? He did, great - he seemed like a nice guy when I met him at Costco. Great - listen, I need a favor. The FBI was here last week to do a US government Contractor Security inspection. One of their recommendations was we needed a defensive armory since we're over an hour out of town. Anyway, I needed the number of a local FFL you trust who would be willing to handle a transfer for a reasonable fee."

"Jackie, pardon me for asking, but what were you looking for. We were going to place an order

for some .223 Bushmasters for patrol rifles, and might be able to order them for you and save you a ton of money!”

“Sheriff Randall, I wanted 6 Bushmaster HBAR AR-15’s with flat tops and C-more sights on them, and an AR-10T with a 3x12x50 scope on it.”

“Jackie, if I were you, if you’re thinking of raising any animals out there, I’d highly recommend a NV scope for either a bushmaster or your AR-10 for coyotes. The previous rancher had a bad problem with them attacking his herds. He lost so many calves that he finally called in a professional hunter. That was 5 years ago, and I’m sure the coyotes will be back by now.”

“I heard howling occasionally at night, but I didn’t think anything of it, are they dangerous?”

“Only to small animals and infants. Otherwise they prey on sheep, cattle, chickens and anything else they can get their hands on - they’re opportunistic hunters, and aren’t above scavenging when they are hungry.”

“OK Sheriff, let me know what you can do for a price. I need to order soon, all we have out here is my personal weapons.”

“Jackie, I’d highly recommend you come into town today and buy a couple of Winchester or Mossberg 12 gauge shotguns until the rifles show up.”

Jackie thanked the Sheriff and hung up. She called the number of the FFL that the Sheriff had given her. She mentioned the Sheriff had given her the number, and asked if they had any Winchester or Mossberg shotguns in stock. He said he had a couple of Mossberg 590s laying around from a cancelled law enforcement order laying around he could sell her cheap. He needed to get them off his inventory. When he named his price, Jackie told him to hold them for her, and 5 boxes of Federal Tactical 00 Buck ammo. He said they would be waiting for her. She got in the CRV and drove to town. An hour later, she pulled into the dealer’s parking lot. He greeted her at the door, then showed her the shotguns. She asked him if he had any Sidesaddles for the Mossberg. He told her he had 3 6-shot models in stock. She said she would take 2, then asked about lights. He said he had a Surefire forend for the Mossberg that would replace the existing forend, that had a high lumen light built in. She asked to see them, and realized they were Surefire P-3s mounted firmly to the forend. This would be better than an aftermarket mounting bracket and a remote pressure switch. When she saw the bayonet mount, she had to ask if he had any bayonets for them. He laughed and said that once he had sold a M - 9 bayonet to some Walter Middy type that bought a 590. His theory was for civilian defense, if you got close enough to use the bayonet, you were about 20 yards too close for comfort. They both laughed, then he went in back and dug out 6 boxes of Federal Tactical Reduced Recoil 9 pellet 00 buck shells. “I know you asked for 5, but I have 6 boxes in stock, and if I give you the case discount, you basically get the 6th box for free!”

Jackie thought about that for a second then said “Great, can you add 2 boxes of Federal or Winchester target loads and 3 boxes of rifled slugs.”

Again he went in back, pulled 2 boxes of target loads, and 3 boxes of rifled slugs. “Anything else?”

“You wouldn’t happen to have some 25 round bandoleers back there would you?”

He started laughing his head off, but came up with 2. Jackie was tempted to do her Pancho Villa impersonation, but she was in a hurry. When he rung up the order, she wrote a company check for the total. He helped her haul the stuff out to her car. “Cute little Honda. California plates I see?”

“Yeah, we finally evacuated Occupied Territory!” Both of them had a good laugh, and Jackie thanked the owner, and said goodbye. She filled up the tank while she was in town and headed back to the ranch. With the shotguns sitting in the open in the back, she would have to wait for later to shop for stuff in town.

When he got home from work, Darrell saw the shotguns and asked Jackie what was going on.

“The Sheriff offered to order the rifles for us and save us a lot of money. He recommended that we buy these for self-defense while we were waiting for the rifles, which could take a month to clear all the paperwork involved. Besides, a shotgun is a great close-range defensive weapon. With slugs, you can shoot out to 100 yards to either stop a vehicle or a person. The Buckshot is good out to 25 and maybe 50 yards max, and will stop anyone it hits. The birdshot is for target practice to get you computer geeks up to speed.”

“Computer Geeks - I resemble that remark! OK, if you think it’s a good idea, I’ll mention it to the board tomorrow that we start target practice after work.”

“Great, thanks Darrell!” Jackie gave him a kiss, and went to make dinner.

Chapter 22

Jackie had finally put her computer together, and was surfing the net on their new microwave link, she was amazed at how fast it was, it was almost twice as fast as their Cable modem DSL service in California. First thing she did was pull up her bookmarked newspapers. She was picky about which papers she read. Everyone in California read the LA Times, which she called “Pravda West” and the New York Times, which she called “Pravda East”. Her tastes ran from the UK Guardian, BBC, the Reuters news service, and for laughs Debka file and Drudge. She subscribed to the Dilbert Comics written by Scott Adams. Darrell swore that Scott must have had a source inside their company! They both laughed their socks off at the Dilbert Comics. Lately, what Jackie had been reading on-line had become very disturbing. With the “torture” of Iraqis, the liberal media was having a field day, and the Middle East, which had Satellite TV, could see the films of the “torture” on their version of the 6 o’clock news. The coverage was inflammatory to say the least, and she thought it was staged. If GW had any common sense, even he could see the writing on the wall, and get our soldiers out of what was becoming a religious civil war between the Sunnis and the Shiites, the 2 main sects of Islam, and the American body count was rising. Not only that, but with our wide open borders, it was only a matter of time before Islamic Terrorists struck again.

Jackie decided to inventory their supplies, and went down to the basement. She had converted their basement into emergency supply storage, and a shelter. It wasn’t much of a shelter, since the building above provided minimal radiation shielding, but she didn’t think radiation would be a big threat. She brought her spreadsheet down with her, and checked off the supplies against the list. She found several holes in their preparations, and decided another Costco run would take care of it. She walked over to Susan’s house, and asked her if she’d like to go to Costco with her. Steve was just leaving to go to the office a block away, and immediately told her to go ahead and buy anything from Costco she thought she needed. They had over 2,000 square feet of storage in the basement. The alternative energy equipment only took up a small corner, since the OutBack Systems system was on modular racks, and wasn’t spread all over the place. Susan went to go make a list while Jackie talked to Darrell to see if he needed anything. An hour later, they left in their F-250 diesel. When they got there, Jackie proceeded to buy mostly staples, and some frozen food. She spent way more money than she thought she was going to, and came out of there with another \$1,000.00 food order. Susan was a little more conservative in her buying habits, so she made it out of there with \$500 worth of staples. They talked on the way back, and Susan agreed that things were going downhill fast for the United States. She agreed that if Kerry got elected in 2004, the country was in deep trouble! Jackie mentioned her Preparedness lifestyle, and the fact she was an NRA certified firearms instructor. “I’ve always wanted to know how to shoot, but buying a gun was such a hassle in the PRC!”

Jackie explained the gun laws of Nevada, and Susan’s eyes got wide. “You’re Kidding - they actually let you carry a loaded gun in your car without a CCW!” Jackie then said “You haven’t heard anything yet - if you want to pay the federal fees, you can own a suppressor or a Full Auto

weapon in Nevada!”

Susan almost fell off the chair laughing until she realized Jackie was serious.

“You’re Serious?”

“Like a Heart Attack! I already ordered 6 Bushmaster HBAR AR-15’s for a defensive armory, and I ordered an AR-10T for me.”

Susan’s next comment showed the extent of her brainwashing “What would you want THOSE GUNS for?”

“For the Same reasons the Liberals don’t want us to have them - to be able to defend ourselves.”

As they continued to talk, Jackie realized she had a potential convert - she would have to go easy since she had been programmed with 30 years of Liberal Theology thanks to the Public Schools of California, the Media, and her “friends”. It would take a long time to de-program her, and help her wake up to reality. Unlike Darrell, she didn’t have a survival emergency to force her to re-evaluate her belief system. Jackie knew her husband Steve was closer to Jackie’s position than Darrell was because he had been in the Military. Hopefully, between the two of them, they could reverse the effects of liberal programming. Jackie thought a small shock would be a start.

“Susan, you know I’m carrying a gun right now?”

Susan looked at Jackie like the Devil Incarnate.

“Susan, I’ve had a Concealed Carry permit for almost 20 years in California, I’m an NRA certified firearms instructor, and I taught Self-Defense for Women classes for over 15 years.”

Susan realized that she didn’t know everything about Jackie that she thought she did.

“In all those years of carrying and training, I’ve never known a gun to go off by itself, or to jump up and kill someone. Matter of fact, I’ve had at least 6 students use my training to save their lives from lethal assaults, including 3 attempted rape/murders. One of my students from California was so grateful she gave me this.”

Jackie handed Susan her Emerson CQC folding knife.

“That’s an original Ernie Emerson CQC, not the knock-off. Even if you can get one, they cost several hundred dollars. The lady I trained had connections, and sent me one of Ernie’s personal knives. I know and practice stuff that can save your life in an emergency. Look around, there’s nothing out here! Calling 911 is a waste of time, if you can’t defend yourself

out here, you're dead - it's that simple!"

Susan's eyes were opening slowly.

Susan finally said the perfect line "I guess you could say we're not in Kansas anymore Toto!"

"Exactly! The sheriff can only patrol so much territory. All of the ranchers have enough firearms to defend their ranches and families against anything that might threaten them. 2 weeks ago that FBI agent came by and told me we needed to upgrade our security, including a defensive armory since the Sheriff's department didn't patrol out that far. That's why I ordered those AR-15's and the AR-10T. They are one of the best weapons for self-defense out to 300 yards, and my AR-10 can hit targets out to twice that far. Since our husbands are working on highly classified programs for the US military, the ranch is a target for Terrorists, and anyone who wants to know what the military is up to. Darrell has agreed that anyone who wants one should get a CCW and carry their personal weapons 24/7. The armory is to repel a serious attack. It will stay under lock and key unless we are practicing, or someone is attacking the ranch. I bought 2 shotguns to hold us over until the Sheriff could order the weapons for us, since they can get them for a lot less than we would pay for them."

The rest of the trip passed silently as Susan ruminated over everything Jackie had said, Jackie seriously hoped the light was dawning, and Susan would get with the program.

When they got to the ranch, Jackie was surprised to see Manny's home was set up and his family was moving in. Darrell had found out from Jim that while his name was Manuel, he went by Manny, so Darrell passed the word. As they unloaded the truck, Jackie counted 6 teenagers helping Manny and Maria unload the van with their possessions. Their 3-bedroom house would be crowded. Jackie wished she would have known, they could have ordered a bigger house! When they finished unloading, Jackie walked over and introduced herself in perfect Californian Spanish. Manny's eyes got huge - then he remembered Jackie was from California. He replied "Buenas Dias Señora Hayes." They conversed in Spanish for several minutes, and when Susan walked over, switched to English in deference to Susan. She heard the tail end of their conversation in Spanish, and she was flabbergasted - was there anything Jackie didn't know? Jackie introduced Susan to Manny's family. Susan almost fainted when Manny reached inside the cab, and strapped on a USGI 1911. Jackie was pleasantly surprised, then remembered that people that didn't go armed 24/7 around here were the exception to the rule. She asked Manny why he had a USGI 1911, and he said it was a gift from his CO when he retired from the USMC. Jackie's eyes got bright. She asked what rank he was when he retired. "I retired as an Infantry Sergeant after several tours with Uncle Sam's Misguided Children. I was involved in Desert Storm Parts 1 and 2, and retired just in time to avoid the Iraq Civil war. I couldn't see dying in a Civil War that we had no business being involved in. We liberated Iraq, but we did a lousy job of it, and as soon as Saddam was eliminated, the Sunnis and the Shiites went at each other - evidently Saddam may have been a brutal dictator, but he kept the religious factions from erupting into a civil war. We lost a lot of good Marines for no good

reason. I'm definitely NOT a dove, but I think unless we have a damn good reason, we ought to stay out of civil wars."

"Manny, Darrell told me you used to work on a ranch around here."

"Matter of fact, it was just up the road. The owners put it up for sale, and I was out of a job. By the way, thanks for the house, it's much larger than the one we were living in."

Jackie was relieved and appalled at the same time. Seeing the look on her face, Manny explained.

"Jackie, most of my relatives in California are living in houses smaller than that, and have a lot more people in them. Usually a family consists of 3 generations living under 1 roof. Crowding is something we're used to."

Jackie asked Manny if he would like to help her build a shooting range for rifle and pistol. It was Manny's turn to smile. "What did you have in mind Señora Hayes?"

"Manny, please, My Mother is Señora Hayes, please call me Jackie! I wanted a 300 yard rifle range, and a 25-yard pistol range, with 10 foot berms for backstops, just like a regulation USMC range."

"Jackie, I can handle that easy, how about targets? I have a "cousin" that works for a company that repairs mine equipment, and they are throwing out fairly large pieces of Armor plate all the time. He could cut them to silhouette shapes, and weld a large nut on the back to use for a reactive target. Then all we'd need to do is suspend them by chains from logs suspended over the firing line."

"Manny, that's an excellent idea. I hate punching paper, because then I have to walk downrange to see if I hit it, and where. If the armor plate is over ¼ inch thick, we can shoot at it all day with the AR-15's, but I'm afraid the .308 would blow right through it!

"If he has some case hardened plate, the .308 should bounce off a suspended target, and if we balance them correctly, the round will wind up in the dirt right in front of the target. I'll check and see if he has some small pieces of hardened plate for the .308. If we use reduced size silhouettes at 300 yards, it would be the same difference as shooting at full-size targets at 600 yards."

"Excellent Manny - tell your "cousin" we'll pay for his labor and materials. Do you and Maria have a car?"

Manny looked down and barely said "No, we couldn't afford one."

Jackie had a brilliant idea. “How would you like mine, It’s used, but in good shape, and it’s an F-250 Diesel. It’s in the company name, so as long as you work for us, it’s free for your use, and we have 10,000 gallons of diesel stored next to the hangar.”

Manny wanted to hug the stuffing out of Jackie, but decided to shake her hand. With tears in his eyes, Manny said “Thank you Señora Hayes, from the bottom of my heart! You are a kind woman.”

“Nonsense Manny, the corporation has 5 of them, and I wanted to get a newer one anyway. I have a sneaky suspicion Darrell is going to use me for the Corporate Gopher.”

“Gopher? - No Compredes Señora.”

“You know - Go for this, go for that!”

“OK, I get it, we used to call them runners in the Corps.”

“Manny, not to change the subject, but do you have a permit for that .45?”

“No Señora, that’s why I carry openly.”

“How would you like one. The Sheriff said he would grant anyone that works for the company one if they passed a background check.”

“Jackie, what do you carry?”

Jackie reached slowly for her holster, and extracted the Para-Ord P-14, and handed it to Manny butt first.

“Con Permiso?”

“Go ahead Manny, It’s cocked and locked.”

Like a good Marine, Manny safed the weapon by dropping the mag, cycling the action to eject the chambered round, and dropped the hammer on an empty chamber. He pocketed the magazine and the spare round, then inspected the gun. Pointing it in a safe direction, he dry fired it several times.

“Muy Bueno! Where can I get one?”

“Manny, how old are your kids?”

“My oldest son is 17, then 15, 13 and 11. My 2 daughters are 10 and 8 years old.”

“OK, I can get you and your wife a Para-Ord P-14 and 6 spare mags. I wanted to do a corporate buy since I talked Darrell into everyone going armed around here - that includes you and your wife if you’re OK with her having a gun.”

“You’re going to give us 2 guns and the magazines? ¿Estas Loco?”

“Let me rephrase that Manny. As long as you and your wife are employees of this company, you are entitled to defend yourselves just like the rest of us. The weapons remain corporate property. We’ll even pay for your CCW permits.”

“Gracias Señora! Yes, I would like my wife to be armed as well, because I might be on the other side of the ranch doing something or she could be out shopping with the children.”

“Manny, I need to certify to the Sheriff that you and your wife are competent with a pistol before he can issue a CCW, could you do me a favor, and help me train the rest of the employees that want a CCW?”

“How many Para-Ords were you going to buy?”

“That depends on how many of Darrell’s friends I can convince that Guns won’t jump out of the holster and shoot them by themselves!”

Manny practically fell on the floor laughing, then he realized Jackie was dead serious.

“Looks like we have our work cut out for us getting these cake-eating Civilians up to speed.”

“That was rather diplomatic of you Manny - you sure you were a Sergeant in the USMC?”

“Si, but they are my bosses, and you don’t disrespect your employers.”

“OK, but be prepared to do your best impersonation of the Drill Sergeant from Hell if they don’t get the message! I need all of them to be capable of Self-defense. And we need to get them up to at least the USMC standard for shooting on the AR-15s, or we might be defending this place all by ourselves.”

Jackie remembered she needed to ask Darrell a question, and told Manny they would talk later. She walked over to the office, and asked Darrell if it would be OK if Manny used their old truck, and she ordered a new one. Darrell thought that was an excellent idea, and called the dealership in Reno. He told Darrell that they would have another truck ready for them tomorrow just like the last 4 they ordered. Jackie gave Darrell a big hug, and walked back over to Manny’s house. Maria answered the door, so Jackie exhausted her knowledge of Spanish with a 5 minute conversation while Manny got out of the bathroom and made himself presentable. Manny walked to the door and Jackie asked if he would mind making a trip to

Reno so she could pick up the other truck. Manny suggested Maria would love to make a trip to Reno, she needed to do some shopping anyway. Jackie asked if they had a Costco membership. Manny said they did, so Jackie dropped it for now. Jackie told Manny that she wanted to get going by 0700 tomorrow. As she walked back to the house, she realized that she would need another emergency kit. She put another kit together out of her stores, and set it by the door. She'd give it to Maria to keep with the vehicle tomorrow, since her kit had extra ammo for her P-14 and some other stuff Maria probably wouldn't know how to use. Jackie made dinner, and Darrell was home at 6:00 sharp. Darrell talked about the progress of the project. Most of it went over Jackie's head, but she understood enough to appreciate what he was doing. Darrell was in a good mood, and after a trip to the hot tub, they retired to the bedroom to continue where they left off.

The next morning, Jackie drove over to Manny's house. Maria answered the door, and Jackie opened the door of the truck for her. While Maria's command of English was more limited than Manny's, Jackie's knowledge of Spanish filled in the gaps, and they had a bilingual conversation all the way to Reno. Maria spent the time talking about her family, and the fact that all the kids were totally bilingual, and her son was about to earn his GED certificate. Maria had home schooled the children most of the time, since the ranch they lived at was almost 2 hours each way from the nearest school. Jackie was impressed, and told Maria so. She didn't see what the big deal was, she thought most people in Rural Nevada home schooled. Jackie explained that were they came from, home schooling was a rarity, and most kids went to either public or private schools, and the wives that didn't have maids worked in the house, and the ones that did wasted their time acting like a bunch of socialites. Jackie had to translate some of that last idea, but Maria got the gist of it when she filled in a few words. Maria spoke of her family that still lived in Los Angeles, and how hard it was to find jobs. Jackie had an idea, but said nothing until she talked with Darrell. Her idea would depend on the successful completion of this contract, and an extension or a new larger contract. Maria said that the land behind theirs was for sale as well, and it was a 1,000 acre section of prime grazing land with water. They could raise at least 100 head of cattle on that acreage, and use the land that was still available out of their original 200 as an organic farm. Jackie knew Darrell would go for the Organic farm in a heartbeat, but the cattle ranch would be a harder sell.

When they got to Reno, they drove into the dealership, and Jackie saw the truck parked out front. When she got out, she took out her pack, and handed Maria a pack just like hers. She explained it was an emergency pack for the vehicle in case she broke down or got stranded for any reason. Maria understood, and thanked Jackie for her generosity. Jackie explained that all the corporate vehicles had an Emergency kit in them, and she needed to take her personal kit with her since it had ammo for her gun in it, and this was to replace the kit in the vehicle. Maria still thanked her, and waited until Jackie started the new diesel truck before she drove off to go shopping. Not one to waste a trip, Jackie made a few stops to sporting goods stores and the Wal-Mart on her way home to replace some stuff from her emergency supplies. She bought water at Wal-mart so there was no reason to stop at the gas station on the way home. She was home that afternoon, and repacked her kits with the supplies she had bought.

Chapter 23

When she got home, Jackie remembered to call the Sheriff to order another AR-10T for Manuel. The Sheriff knew Manuel well, and told Jackie if he wanted a CCW, he could issue one without the usual rigmarole. Jackie said his wife Maria wanted one too. The Sheriff said “If she wants one too, I’ll do both of them at the same time. Just make sure she can shoot, since I’m giving her a permit without the usual shooting proficiency requirements.”

Jackie reassured the Sheriff. “Manny is helping me build a USMC regulation shooting range for rifles and pistols. He has a cousin that works at a shop that repairs mine equipment who will build us swinging targets out of armor plate scraps. We were going to hang them from chains across the lanes at 25 and 100 yards. He was going to make some reduced size plates to simulate 300 and 600 yards.”

“Great, when it’s finished give me a call, I’ve wanted to shoot Cowboy Action for years now, and that sounds exactly like their setup.”

“Come on over whenever you want, I’d suggest to call first to make sure someone is here for safety reasons.”

“OK, Jackie, I’ll mail these to you, they should be in tomorrow’s mail.”

“Thanks Sheriff. Oh, by the way, any ideas where I can get a half-dozen Para Ordinance P-14’s in brushed stainless, with 3 mags each, and a Bladetech IWB holster with an off-side carrier.”

“Sounds like you did your homework?”

“That’s exactly what I am carrying right now - I retired the Glock. 14 rounds of 45 beats 7 rounds any day!”

“I know, I wanted to buy the same guns, but the County Commissioners vetoed the idea, so instead, I added the P-14 to the approved weapons list, We provide Glock 45’s, but some officers prefer the cocked and locked carry, and paid for their own guns. I can e-mail you the info of the dealer we wanted to order them from, and a copy of a letter to send him so he’ll give you a Law Enforcement discount. By the way, everyone at Winnemucca Systems with a CCW are now reserve officers in the Humboldt County Sheriff’s office. You have no powers of arrest beyond a Citizen’s Arrest since you haven’t graduated a POST program.”

“I don’t understand - why would you do that for us?”

“I do it for all the remote ranchers, since the response time to some of the ranches is measured

in hours, so they can get LEO only equipment and discounts on firearms.

“By LEO only, I’m assuming you are NOT authorizing purchase of flash bangs or other destructive devices?”

“Exactly Jackie, don’t abuse the privilege. This is mostly a legal dodge to get around the AWB, which I think is the stupidest law Congress ever passed. The letter and the contact info for the dealer should be in your e-mail in a few minutes.”

“Thanks Sheriff.”

Jackie hung up and checked her e-mail; sure enough there was a letter from the Sheriff attached to an e-mail with the dealer’s contact information. The letter authorized the dealer to sell anything except destructive devices and full-auto weaponry to Winnemucca Systems at LEO only prices. Jackie called the dealer, faxed him the letter, and asked for a quote for 6 Para-Ord P-14’s with 12 extra high-cap mags, for a total of 18 mags. Half an hour later, Jackie received the quote via e-mail. Jackie took the quote to Darrell for a Purchase Order. Darrell gave her a funny look, approved it, and issued a PO. Jackie faxed the PO and the quote back to the dealer, who would ship the merchandise to the Sheriff’s office for Jackie, since everything he sold to Law Enforcement had to be shipped to a Law Enforcement address. It would be there in a day or two. Jackie realized she would need a large quantity of defensive and practice ammo, and called around. The local Wal-Mart had Winchester White Box 230gr FMJ ammo for \$9.00 per hundred, or a case of 1,000 rounds for \$80.00. Jackie asked the sporting goods manager to hold a case for her, and she’d be there in a couple of days. They didn’t carry the Cor-bon Flying Ashcan rounds, so she had to keep looking. Finally she located a gun shop in town, and he had them, but wanted too much until Jackie dropped the Sheriff’s name. All of a sudden, his price dropped in half. He said that he would need to see the Sheriff’s LEO letter to get that price. Jackie said she would buy a case at that price, then he said a case was cheaper, and quoted an even lower price. Jackie asked him to hold a case for a couple of days. He agreed, then she hung up.

Jackie went out and gave Manny the good news. He was busy working on the firing range. Even though they didn’t have the targets yet, the dirt work, even with the tractor would take several days. Manny had selected a spot so if a round missed the berms, or skipped over the top, it wouldn’t hit anything. He also made a 3-sided berm instead of just a backstop. Jackie was pleasantly surprised, and asked Manny about it.

“Jackie, in the Marines, we never had to worry about people being anywhere near our range, we had absolute control over our range, and everyone knew to stay far away from the impact area just in case. There are niños around here, and we need to be extra careful.”

“Great work Manny. Let me know when you are ready to put the poles in, and I’ll help.” They had a post-hole digger, but lifting and dropping the poles into the holes was definitely a 2 man

job. Manny could lift them with a chain attached to either the bucket or the backhoe if he had it attached, but someone still needed to manhandle it into the hole. Manny told Jackie he appreciated the help. Jackie mentioned Darrell was a gourmet cook, and missed the Mexican food from California. He asked if Maria could come over some time, and teach him how to make several of his favorite dishes. Jackie said she could watch the kids while she was working with Darrell.

“Of Course, Jackie, Maria loves to cook, and she would be honored to show Darrell how to make his favorite foods.”

Jackie thanked Manny, and walked off to give Darrell the good news. Darrell said he would be free this weekend if it was OK with Maria. Jackie was getting a workout with all this walking, and walked back over to Manny, and asked him if Saturday morning would be OK.

“Sure Jackie, I’ll ask Maria, but I don’t see any problems.” Jackie said she had to go and thanked Manny.

When she got home Jackie mentally smacked her forehead - she had forgotten to order the ammo for the AR-15’s and AR-10. She got on the internet and quickly fixed that problem. She ordered a case of Winchester .223 55gr JHP ammo, and a case of .308 match ammo. She wanted to make sure she could hit a target at 600 yards with the AR-10T. She thought she should order some SS109 ammo for the AR-15’s but she wanted to talk to the Sheriff first, since she wasn’t convinced they were worth the extra cost over Military ball ammo. She hoped she could get some AP ammo for the .308, she’d have to ask the Sheriff about that too. When she got finished, she made dinner since Darrell would be getting home soon.

The next morning, Jackie talked to Manny, and they both smacked their foreheads - they hadn’t even thought of fencing in the property. Manny had an excellent idea. He had a bunch of “cousins” who were between jobs, and he could supervise them building the fence, and still get the firing range done. Jackie asked how much this would cost.

“About ¼ what a contractor would charge. These guys know what they’re doing as well, since most of them have worked on ranches before, building fences and other manual labor.”

"Great, let me call Darrell and ask him." By now Jackie had gotten smart and was carrying her cell phone with her - she could call Darrell on the cell phone for stuff like this instead of having to hike a mile each way!

“Darrell, I totally dropped the ball on this one. We forgot to fence the property in, like the FBI guy said we should. Manny has some “cousins” who are out of work, and would love the work to build a fence. They all have done this before, and Manny could supervise and still get his work done, including the firing range.”

“OK, Jackie, how much would all this cost?”

“Manny said about a quarter what a contractor would charge us. I think we should go ahead and do this, but it is your call.”

“OK, Jackie, I’ll authorize it. I’ll have to talk to Jim about how to pay them, since putting them on the payroll would be expensive.”

Manny must have been psychic, or overheard part of the conversation. “Excuse me Jackie, I can solve the payroll problem. One of my “cousins” owns a small business that does gardening and landscaping. We could run the project through there, and he can pay them, since most of them are probably illegals anyway, they won’t be filing taxes on the income.

“Darrell, Manny solved the problem for us. Seems one of his “cousins” owns a landscaping business, and we could run the project through the business, and he would be responsible for paying everyone.”

“Jackie, make sure you thank Manny, that would give us a legal way to pay them, and deniability if the INS squawks about it.”

“Manny, Darrell wanted to thank you, that was an excellent idea, and he approves. Get hold of your cousin with the landscaping business, and have him give us a written quote, and we can arrange any payment schedule he is comfortable with. We can write checks daily, weekly or monthly based on progress, or we can pay him the entire contract on completion.”

“Jackie, he is just as poor as the rest of us, there isn’t much call for landscaping in the desert, and the business is a front so he can pay his “cousins” for day labor. He would need checks at least weekly, and probably daily to start, since they are family men who need to feed their families.”

“OK, Manny, I’ll arrange it with Darrell, we’ll have to write him a check, since we don’t keep hardly any cash on the premises.”

After work that day Manny drove into Winnemucca, and brought his “cousin” back with him to meet Jackie. He looked at the project, and had a conversation in rapid-fire Spanish with Manny. Jackie caught about 2/3 of it, enough to know this guy was legitimate. Manny asked Jackie if they could rent another tractor like Manny’s since the work would go much faster. Jackie asked how long they would need it, and Manny said it would take a month to fence 200 acres using field fence and barbed wire. They would normally go with 3-strand barbed wire, but he wanted to add 4 feet of field fence below 2 strands of barbed wire to make the fence 6 feet high, then they could install strain gauges on the fence to detect anyone cutting or climbing by the sudden change in strain. Jackie realized that Manny must have learned Security systems for securing a permanent base from the Marines, since she would have never thought about strain gauges. She

would have used motion detectors, that could be faked out by deer or any other large animal. Cattle almost instinctively stay away from barbed wire, unless they need to scratch an itch. Since they wouldn't have any cattle on the property, the strain gauges should be the most reliable sensors to use. The detectors would be set to detect a sudden increase or decrease in strain. Jackie asked Manny if he could use another tractor on the property. Manny told Jackie that if they could turn the empty acreage into a truck farm, they could make money with the vegetables, can what they needed, and sell the rest. Jackie asked if they could do it using organic techniques. The light bulb went on, and Manny had a big grin. If he could do an organic farm, Darrell would approve it in a heartbeat.

"Jackie, if we were to do the farm, we could use another tractor, maybe Darrell would approve?"

"I'll present it to him tomorrow. See Ya later, Manny!"

"Hasta La Vista, Señora."

Darrell arrived home 5 minutes after Jackie was done talking with Manny, good thing dinner was done already!

"Darrell, Manny is a genius, not only did he solve the security problem, but he has figured out a way to make those remaining acres productive. He wants to start an organic truck farm on the 35 or so acres remaining. We are going to need another tractor for the fencing project, and with 2 tractors, they can work a larger area than if they just had one for the farm."

"Jackie, I wanted to do an organic farm ever since we bought this property. If Manny wants to run it, I say we go for it. If he thinks it could turn a profit, so much the better."

"Manny said we could can all the produce we want, and sell the rest locally. Grocery stores will pay top dollar for organically grown produce."

"OK, Jackie, let's do it! I hope dinner's ready, I'm starving."

"Dinner's already done. I'll serve it in a second."

The next day, Manny and Jackie started making plans for the garden. First thing he needed was a huge quantity of organic fertilizer. Luckily, one of his "cousins" was a ranch hand at a huge horse ranch, and they could have all the horse manure they could haul. Jackie asked Manny if his sons wanted to tackle that project. Matter of fact, if they wanted to work the truck garden, she could make them employees and pay them for their work, as long as it didn't interfere with their schoolwork.

Manny could have hugged the stuffing out of Jackie again, this was a dream come true. His oldest son, Rafael would have needed to move to Reno to find work. If he could get a good

paying job working on the truck farm, he could stay at home for a while, and build up a nest egg.

“Jackie, I don’t know how to thank you, but Thank You from the bottom of my heart!”

“Don’t worry Manny, if they’re half as hard working as you, it will be money well spent. Besides, this keeps your family together, and I know you were worried about Rafael having to move away to find work. This way, he can stay here and work with you.”

Jackie’s cell phone picked that minute to ring. It was the Sheriff telling her the Para-Ord pistols, mags, and holsters were in. Jackie thanked him and hung up.

“Manny, the pistols are in. Can you check with your cousin about the targets so we can start shooting later this week?”

“Sure Jackie, can I borrow your phone?”

Jackie handed Manny her cell phone, and he carried on a rapid fire conversation in Spanish. “He said they would be done in 2 days, which is about how long it will take us to finish the range.”

Manny handed Jackie back her phone. She realized she needed to talk to Darrell about getting him a cellular phone. Making him walk to his house to make phone calls, or walking back to the office to ask a question was a waste of his time and energy. When Manny had gone back to work, she called Darrell. “Honey, what do you think about giving Manny a cell phone? He needed to borrow my phone to call a guy who was building our targets, or else he would have to walk all the way back to his house.”

“Jackie, now that the 2 gold diggers are gone, I was thinking about getting Susan and the other wife a cell phone as well, so you might as well get one for Manny.”

“Great, I need to go to town today anyway. Could you call the Cellular company and authorize 3 more phones, and tell them I’ll be in there a little over an hour from now to pick them up?”

“Ok, Jackie, I’ll do it right now! Bye Sweetie!”

Jackie was amazed at how affectionate Darrell had become, but she wasn’t complaining. She walked over to her new truck, and got in to drive the hour to Winnemucca. She stopped at the Cellular store first, since she didn’t want to stop anywhere after she got the pistols. By the time she got there, the phones were programmed and charged. All she had to do was sign the contract for the company. Jackie signed, and took the phones including a wall charger and cigarette lighter adapter for each phone. She next drove to the gun dealer and Wal-Mart to pick up the ammo. Since the cases were heavy, the Sporting goods manager helped her load it in the bed of the truck, as did the Dealer. She got in again and drove over to the Sheriff’s office and picked up the guns. They were in the Sheriff’s office, and he was practically drooling over one of the guns.

“Dang, Jackie, I wish the County would have approved these P-14 Limiteds. I fired one years ago, and it was a tack driver, and 100% reliable. I like the brushed stainless finish. It cuts the shine, yet the stainless is perfect for a gun that gets carried close to the body all day. I checked the order for you, and he shipped 6 guns and 18 magazines, as well as 6 Bladetch IWB holsters and double-mag carriers. The permits should be in your mailbox today. How’s the range coming?”

“I talked to Manny, the range should be finished in a couple of days. He said 2 days, but I’d add a day just to be safe. If you want to come out Friday afternoon, I’m sure we’ll be busy shooting up the targets.”

“OK, Jackie, see you then!”

The Sheriff helped Jackie carry the pistols and gear out to the truck.

“Dang, that’s a nice truck Jackie!”

“We’ve got four others just like it. Jim said the roads can get pretty bad in the winter and spring.”

“He wasn’t kidding, our county doesn’t have the budget to plow anything besides the main roads. If I were you, I’d invest in a snow plow, or you might get stranded there if a bad storm rolls in.”

“Thanks for the advice. I’ll see you Friday.”

Jackie jumped in the truck and headed back to the ranch. She turned on the radio, and the news out of the Middle East was getting worse. It seemed that more and more prisoner abuse scandals were coming out, or else the media was making them up. Either way, George Bush’s chances for re-election were sliding down the drain. If that happened, she was sure Kerry would decimate the military to pay for more misguided social programs, and the terrorists would have a field day! Jackie scoffed at the Democrat’s idea of “social programs”. All they needed to do was get the Welfare recipient’s lazy butts off the couch and have them picking lettuce for a few weeks, and they’d be amazed how fast they would find another job.

Jackie tried to keep her ear to the ground, but she was sure the major media outlets were spinning the news to make Bush look bad, but she wasn’t sure how much was spin, and how much was fact. Drudge said it was all a fabrication, and UK Guardian claimed the LA Times articles were at least half spin. She wished she could read an Arabic paper to find out what people in the Middle East thought. Debka File was so pro-Israeli that she couldn’t be sure of their accuracy either. Everyone had an agenda. Didn’t anyone print the truth anymore, she cried inwardly. Arriving at the Ranch ended her emotional turmoil, and she got out to check the mail. Just as the Sheriff had promised, Manny and Maria’s CCWs were in the mail. She drove over to

Manny's house, and gave him the permits, 2 pistols, 6 mags, the holsters and 3 boxes of Defensive Ammo. She advised Manny to ask Maria not to carry concealed off the property until she had verified Maria's shooting ability, since she had promised the Sheriff. Manny was glad Maria wasn't going anywhere for a few days, and told Jackie that she would be shooting the first day. Manny had taught her to shoot his 1911, so she would have no problems with the P-14 Limited. Manny finished the berms that afternoon, and would set the posts the next day. Manny's cousins would arrive tomorrow to build the fence. Darrell had already ordered all the fencing material, and it would be delivered first thing tomorrow. A used Kubota tractor would be delivered tomorrow as well, with all the implements the first tractor had. Manny suggested a PTO 5Kw generator, and Jackie approved. It would be a good idea to have another power source to move around the property. She would check around for connectors to connect it into the ranch's power supply in case they needed the extra power in an emergency. Manny told her as soon as he was done with the range, he would get started on the organic farm. They had to scrape the property to remove all the sagebrush and other stuff, then dump about 30-50 pickup loads full of manure, or else, if they could borrow a big dump truck from someone, a few 10-yard truckloads would do the trick. Jackie asked Manny if he had a "cousin" that had a dump truck.

Manny laughed and said he would check.

Chapter 24

The next morning after Darrell had gone to work, the UPS driver showed up with multiple packages for Jackie Hayes. Two of them were so heavy the driver grunted when he lifted them onto his delivery dolly, and the third was smaller and much lighter. She signed for the delivery, and had him stack the heavy boxes inside the door, then she took the smaller package into her office to open it. She was glad that Darrell's birthday present had shown up. She ordered a Cold Steel LTC Kukhri just like hers, except she had it customized by a local knifemaker by replacing the Valox handles with black canvas micarta scales with finger grip profiling, and an integral guard. He had made a lanyard opening in the scales using a piece of brass tubing and flaring both ends. She had sent it to Dave at Sheathmechanic to make one of his famous custom Kydex sheaths with a piggybacked pouch. She went into the closet and threaded the Tec-lock over the belt of the fanny pack she had made for Darrell. She had threaded one of her Kydex open-top holsters for the P-14 and a dual-mag carrier onto the other side of the fanny pack belt, and a 1qt Military Canteen, cover, cup and stove next to the LTC Kukhri. She hoped Darrell would like his birthday present. She put it in a box and hid it in her closet until his birthday.

She walked over to the shooting range, and Manny was almost finished with the dirt work, including digging the post holes for the supports to hold the targets. He decided to use some old telephone poles since they were weatherproof and free. When he had the holes bored, he grabbed the first support and hooked the chain to the bucket, and lifted it up while Jackie manhandled it into the hole, and he lowered it. It only took half an hour to set the pole, and soon they had all 4 poles set. Manny took a 30 foot pole, and carefully bored holes in both ends to take 2 foot long lag screws, then lifted it into place. Jackie had set a ladder up against the support pole, and taking a compressor and an air impact wrench, drove the lag bolt through the crosspiece, and 1 foot into the support, then repeated the process on the other end. With the connectors bolted together, the supports weren't going anywhere. They moved over to the pistol range, and repeated the process.

By lunch they were finished, just as the Mexican work crew showed up. Jackie went inside to wash up and fix some iced tea while Manny got the crew set up. There were piles of materials laying all around, so the first thing they did was take the fence posts, and lay them along the fence line every 10 feet, then lay the field fence every 50 feet since they were 50 foot rolls. The Barbed wire came in 100 foot rolls, so they were spaced 2 rolls every 100 feet. By the time they had the materials laid out, the lowboy with the other tractor and the implements showed up. They quickly unloaded the tractor, drove it to the fuel farm, and filled the tank with diesel while the other men assembled the post hole auger, since they needed to bore a post hole every 50 feet to hold the fence in tension. They had several fence post drivers that would be operated by hand. It was tough work, but they were used to it. Later that afternoon, Jackie brought out several gallons of ice water for the workers. One or two made a comment in Gutter Spanish, but Jackie's sharp retort in Spanish silenced any further catcalls. When Manny heard about the comments, he wanted to walk over there and shoot the offending parties. Jackie said not to

worry, she had heard worse, besides the looks on their faces when she replied in Spanish was worth it! She knew that wouldn't happen again, since not only did she speak Spanish, but the foreman told the crew that she was expert shot with that 45 on her belt, and any further comments could result in the offender being buried out in the desert with a bullet hole through his forehead.

Manny called his cousin, who said the plates were done, and he would appreciate if they could pick them up this afternoon. Manny asked him how much they cost, and he said \$50.00. Jackie got petty cash, and the directions from Manny, and drove there that afternoon. Manny's cousin was polite and friendly, and helped her load the heavy plates into the bed of the truck. Jackie gave him the cash, and he gave her a receipt. She stopped and picked up a few things at the grocery store for a special Birthday dinner for Darrell, then drove home. She parked as close to the shooting range supports as she could, since the targets were heavy. Manny helped her unload them, and they stacked them on the ground in front of the target support..

Today was Darrell's birthday, but he didn't like big birthday parties since he was officially over the hill at 51 years old, so he and Jackie were planning a quiet evening at home. Maria had given Jackie the recipe for Carne Asada, since she knew Darrell liked it. She marinated the meat all afternoon, and right before Darrell came home, Jackie heated the cast iron skillet smoking hot, added some oil and the meat. The meat sizzled and she stirred vigorously. Darrell walked in the door right as she finished.

"What's the occasion, that smells terrific?"

"Happy Birthday dear! Sit down, dinner's ready, then you get to open your present."

They sat down to a dinner of Carne Asada, Spanish rice, refried beans, and steamed flour tortillas. Jackie had bought a 6-pack of Coronas and 2 limes. She cut the lime into wedges, and stuck the 6-pack in the freezer to get very cold. Darrell was in a very good mood after dinner. Jackie went to her room to get his birthday present. When he saw the box, he joked, "Where's the sexy negligee?"

Jackie grinned and said "Later, birthday boy, first you open your present."

Darrell opened the box, and was surprised to see a fanny pack with a LTC Kukhri and a Para-Ord P-14. "Thanks Jackie, I'd forgotten all about that knife. I was talking to Steve the other day, and he said I should have a CCW, since as the President of the company, I'd be a prime target for kidnapping, either for ransom, or the information in my head. Steve really likes the Para-Ord P-14 Limited. I guess this means I get to try out your new shooting range?"

"Manny has agreed to teach all you Computer Geeks how to shoot, and he used to be a Drill Sergeant, so don't give him any problems."

“Thanks, Jackie” Darrell got up and hugged Jackie “Now where’s the rest of my present?”

“It’s out in the Hot Tub. Last one in is a Rotten Egg!”

They quickly undressed, and ran naked to the Hot tub. Jackie beat Darrell by a stride, but he had to take his shoes off. Darrell had to admit that making love in a hot tub was a great way to spend your 51st Birthday!

The next morning, Jackie and Manny hung the targets from 2 heavy chains each, and spaced them 1 foot apart. The 30-foot support had 15 targets on it, and the pistol range had another 15 targets on it. Manny used a survey tape to measure off 100 yards for the rifle range, then measured 15 yards and 25 yards for the pistol range. At the end of the day, everyone came out to try the new range. Manny had pasted stickers on the centers of the targets to simulate 300 and 600 yard targets. The larger 300 yard sticker was directly below the smaller 600 yard sticker. The pistol targets had 2 stickers on each of them to indicate the heart/lung region, and the “lights out” spot on the forehead. The lower part of the head might or might not result in a fatal hit, so he didn’t include it. Jackie had stacked boxes of the FMJ .45 ammo next to the 25-yard line on a couple of heavy duty folding tables. Manny, Maria, Jackie, Darrell, Steve, and Susan all showed up ready to shoot. The other board members hung back to observe and make sure none of the guns jumped up and shot someone by themselves. Jackie had bought a dozen noise suppression headsets, and handed them out, even to the “observers” explaining that they needed them since that many pistols firing could get loud. Everyone on the firing line was either wearing, or was issued safety glasses. While they weren’t fashion statements, they worked. Jackie and Manny both had their Gargoyle shooting glasses. Darrell commented about the cool shooting glasses, and Manny said that they’d get him a pair if he could put a whole magazine on the target from the 25 yard line. First they moved to the 15-yard line in deference to Darrell and Susan. Steve decided to go first, since his shooting skills wouldn’t intimidate Susan or Darrell. He removed his P-14 from his holster, unloaded the defensive ammo, and loaded 2 mags full of the practice ammo. He pocketed the defensive ammo, slammed the mag home, and cycled the action. He cocked the hammer, and set the safety, then holstered the weapon. He walked up to the 15-yard firing line with his hands up to indicate he was ready. Manny performed a range check, and said, “Range Hot, Clear to Fire!” Steve reached down with his right hand to his holster, got a firing grip on the gun while pulling it from the holster, and brought his hands together in a perfect Weaver stance. As soon as the sights settled on the target, he squeezed the trigger, and was rewarded with a “Ding” as the round bounced off the plate. He switched to the next target to the right, and repeated the process. Out of 14 rounds, he had 10 solid hits in the center sticker. He reloaded, checked with Manny, and did it again, this time getting 11 out of 14. When Steve was out of Ammo, Manny closed the range, and replaced the stickers. Maria decided to go next. She took out her P-14, and like Steve, emptied the magazines of defensive ammo, then reloaded with practice ammo. When she was ready, she imitated Steve, and held her hands at shoulder level indicating she was ready. Manny did a range safety check, and told Maria “Range Hot, Clear to fire.” Since Manny was taught to shoot by the USMC, she adopted the Weaver stance as well. She got 12 out of 14 her first magazine,

then went 14 for 14 on her second mag. When she was finished shooting, she re-holstered her gun with the slide locked open. When Manny had cleared the range, he stopped being a Drill Instructor for a second and gave his wife a big hug!

Darrell being a perpetual wise guy said, “Hey Manny, if I go 14 for 14, do I get a big hug too?”

Manny had a funny look on his face, then realized Darrell was being a wiseguy, and decided to respond in kind. “No but if you want, I can give you a big kiss!”

The entire crowd had heard this exchange, and were trying hard not to fall down laughing.

Manny said, “OK Mr.Wiseguy, you’re next!”

Darrell walked up to the shooting line like a man facing a firing squad. Just what he didn’t want to do, get Manny mad at him right before he had to shoot. Manny’s smile told Darrell he wasn’t mad - just playing with Darrell’s mind. Manny gave Darrell the “New Shooter Lecture” including basic weapons safety, the nomenclature of the 1911, weapons operation and manipulation, how to execute the Weaver stance, recoil control, aim, and trigger control. Before he let Darrell load live rounds, he had him practice by dry firing a couple of dozen times until Manny felt he was comfortable. Jackie had loaded a few mags for Darrell while Manny was talking, and handed them to Manny, who stood 1 pace back and to the left of Darrell when he got ready to shoot. Manny told Darrell only to shoot at the left-most target, and line his sights up just under the big sticker in the center representing the heart/lung zone. Finally, Manny performed a Range Safety Check, and told Darrell “Range Hot, Clear to Fire.” and handed him a magazine.

Darrell was shaking like a leaf, but realized he had to know how to defend himself, and settled right down. He slammed the magazine home, and cycled the action. Since he wasn’t drawing from a holster just yet. Manny had him start from the low ready position with his finger off the trigger. Manny noticed Darrell was following his directions exactly, then he pulled the gun up onto the target, and noticed that the sights lined up in his vision naturally. He made a slight adjustment, and squeezed the trigger. Darrell’s first round actually struck the target, and he felt like he had won the Superbowl! “This is fun!” Darrell thought to himself. As soon as the gun came back on target, he squeezed off a second round. He was 2 for 2. He kept it up until the magazine locked empty, and Manny handed him a second mag, and told him to put one round on each target. He slammed the magazine home with the palm of his hand, and resumed his shooting grip, then grabbed the slide, and chambered a round. He was steadier this time, and his first round hit. He rushed his second round, and it was a clean miss. He steadied on the third target, realized this wasn’t a speed contest, and tagged it cleanly. He kept swiveling right and shooting. His final tally was 10-14, not bad for a beginner. When his gun locked empty, he ejected the empty mag, and handed the gun and the magazine to Manny. He turned around and there was Jackie. She gave him a big hug and a “Well Done!” As they walked off the shooting line, Jackie couldn’t resist it any more and whispered in Darrell’s ear “Well young Skywalker,

now your journey to the Dark Side is Complete!” If Jackie wouldn’t have been still holding him, he would have fallen down laughing!

Susan was the next victim, and the most apprehensive. She had always wanted to own a gun, now she was faced with the reality. Jackie saw how bad she was shaking, and walked up to her and gave her a big hug, and some sisterly support. She calmed down and paid attention to Manny while he gave his New Shooter orientation. She had watched intently as the others shot, and had the basics down. Manny still had her dry fire a dozen times to get the feel of it. Finally, when she was ready, Manny handed her a loaded mag, and she slammed it home like a pro. She too was starting at the low ready, so as soon as Manny told her the range was clear, she brought her gun up and centered it on the bullseye. The gun didn’t recoil near what she thought it would after seeing all those movies with the guy shooting the gun and the barrel wound up pointing skyward. The recoil was more like a soft push, and she quickly recovered and squeezed the trigger again. Her second round hit the center of the target again, and so did the rest of the magazine. Just like Darrell, Manny asked her to put 1 round into each target with the second magazine. She went 9 for 14, since she was having a little more trouble transitioning between targets than Darrell did. Her misses were left and right of the target instead of up and down, so Manny knew how to solve the problem. When she was finished, he handed her another magazine, and told her “This time, stop your swing before you squeeze the trigger. Its more of a stop and start motion than a pure swing like a shotgun.” This time she went 13 for 14. When she handed the gun back to Manny, Steve was there to give her a big hug and a kiss. That left the “observers” or Manny and Jackie. Since none of the “observers” were in the mood to touch a gun, Manny decided to move everyone back to the 25 yard line, since Jackie agreed that 15 yards was too easy!

While they all moved back, Manny put fresh stickers on the targets, and walked back to join them. Jackie was in the process of unloading her mags when Manny walked up. “Ladies First” Manny said to Jackie as she finished loading 3 magazines full of FMJ practice ammo. She holstered her gun, and put the 2 spares in her left front pants pocket. Manny was still acting as the Range Officer, and as she approached the line, he looked around and performed a Range Safety Check. Then he said “Range Hot. Clear to fire!” Jackie drew and double-tapped 7 targets in sequence, did a combat reload, and double-tapped the next 7. Then she reloaded again and hit 14 targets with head shots. When she was finished, Manny was standing there dumbfounded thinking “Madre De Dios! She can Shoot!” When she had safed her gun, she walked up to Manny and told him she had been an NRA shooting instructor for over 10 years. Manny just shook his head. He hoped she didn’t shoot that well with the AR-10T, or he would need to put in some more time practicing. Manny and Jackie switched places. Manny knew the pressure was on, but tried to ignore it. He knew he could shoot clean, and he had done it before. He just wasn’t sure if he could do it as fast as Jackie had. He took his time reloading to get his heart rate down, and dried his palms several times on his pants. Finally he had 3 magazines loaded, and could put it off no longer. He loaded his P-14, cycled the slide and set the safety so the gun was cocked and locked, then put his 2 spare mags in his left front pants pocket too. Jackie was acting as Range Officer, so she looked around, and told Manny when he was ready

“Range Hot, Clear to shoot.” Manny drew and fired, double tapping 7 targets, reloaded, shot 7 more, and reloaded again, and put 13 out of 14 in the head. He missed 1 round and took almost 5 seconds longer than Jackie, good thing they didn’t have a timer. After he had safed his weapon and picked up his mags, Jackie walked over and shook his hand. “Manny, you did well. I’ve had a lot more practice than you, and I shot IPSC competition for a couple years, so I’m used to shooting fast. By the way, you did a good job teaching Maria to shoot, she is shooting good enough to carry concealed, so you can tell her it’s OK to carry wherever she wants now.”

“Thanks Jackie, by the way that was some demonstration you put on, if you shoot that good with the AR-10T, I’m in trouble!”

“Manny, you’re in luck, pistol shooting is my specialty. Maybe you can help me with my long-distance shooting?”

“Sure, No problemo!”

Chapter 25

When she got home that evening, Darrell was watching the 6 o'clock news. The news out of the Middle East was not good. In the aftermath of the prisoner abuse scandal, every Mullah that could get in front of a camera was screaming about Jihad, including some that weren't screaming for a Jihad earlier. Al Quaeda had finally been whittled down to size, but all that meant was the middle-level people were free agents to recruit other Moslem Terrorists. Indonesia was ripe for recruitment, as well as parts of Africa, and most of Europe. Also there were huge sleeper cells in America. Dearborn Michigan was a case in point. The recent scandals had galvanized large segments of normally peace-loving American Moslems to plan retribution for what they had seen as an attack against Islam, with the help of radical mullahs like Lois Farrakhan and others less well known, but known to US security forces. The radicals made sure they were squeaky clean, and delegated duties to sleepers who had infiltrated during the last 20 years. The Internet provided the targeting information, but not in a way anticipated by the CIA or NSA. Instead of a coded message, they sent a perfectly innocent advertisement from the Mall of America that mentioned the Day after Thanksgiving sale. Since it wasn't from a site that was on the watch list, it was totally ignored. The ones who weren't scheduled to become human bombs were to attack infrastructure. Thanksgiving was only a few months away.

Darrell got some good news a few weeks later. They were ready to compile and de-bug their program 3 months early. They spent the next week doing nothing but working on the program. They found a few bugs, and instead of writing a patch, they went back to the source code, and re-wrote whole sections of code to fix the bug. They accomplished the task almost a month early, and also accomplished a first, they delivered bug-free, patch free software under bid and early. This was the Secretary of the Navy's personal project. He had realized that the bureaucracy was getting in the way of any new computer systems for the entire US Navy. Most of the cost of new programs and weapons was to make them compatible with the archaic computers the NAVY used. NAVSEA was the chief culprit, so the Secretary designed this program to totally bypass NAVSEA and all the bureaucrats. If Darrell's company was right, not only was change doable, but relatively cheap compared to the costs of making 21st Century technology mate up to late 20th Century hardware. The Secretary was impressed, and asked Darrell to fly his entire programming team to Washington DC to meet with his staff next week. Darrell asked Steve if they could fly to DC with the Twin Commander. Steve said he would have to stop to refuel to be on the safe side somewhere around Kansas. Darrell told Steve what was up, and the entire meeting was on the qt since the Secretary wanted to spring this on NAVSEA as a fait accompli, and tell them to live with it, or get out! The Secretary thought better of it, and called Darrell back, saying they would meet in Topeka KS, and they could rent a conference room so the drones in the Pentagon wouldn't have a clue what was going on. Darrell thought that was an even better idea, and the Secretary would e-mail them the details. Darrell called Steve and notified him of the change of plans. Steve was all for staying out of DC. True to his word, the Secretary e-mailed him the details from his home computer that

evening. Darrell had to laugh, because the way the Secretary had worded the e-mail, it sounded like he was meeting his mistress, not arranging a clandestine meeting with a government contractor. Darrell had to admire the Secretary, this e-mail would definitely throw off the dogs. The Secretary flew via MAC, and his staff flew commercial to further confuse anyone who might be interested in what he was doing. They all arrived in Topeka Kansas within an hour of each other. The Secretary warmly welcomed Darrell and the rest of his programming team. They presented the software to the Navy, then they were dropped a bombshell.

“I want you guys to head up Phase II. I’ve selected a decommissioned frigate at the San Diego Navy boneyard to undergo a transformation to a modern computerized system that will run the entire ship, handle the weapons, and integrate all the sensors. Sun Microsystems has already delivered a sealed bid for building the computer and the interfaces. I need you to keep track of the project, and help work out any problems. I can pay your company 100 million dollars for a 10-year contract, plus expenses. I’ll authorize monthly payments to your company. If this goes as I hope it will, you are going to have to hire a bunch of people to implement this in the entire fleet when I get Congressional approval to replace the 1960s and 1970s computer systems in the fleet. I’m tired of the Air Force getting cutting edge technology, and the Navy having to make do with a total Kluge of modern weapons and archaic computers. I’d like to do this change to the 688i sub fleet next, because integrating their systems would make them virtually unbeatable. The Aegis equipped ships are screaming for modern displays and controls. Even the aircraft carriers could benefit from this. Imagine being able to see in real time what a Hawkeye aircraft over 100 miles away from you is seeing on radar, and the symbology actually makes sense.”

“Mr. Secretary, I’d love to do this project for you. Please e-mail a copy of the contract to my attorney and he’ll review it, I’ll sign it after he approves it. Nice doing business with you.”

Darrell, Steve and the rest of the team drove back to the airport, and flew back to Winnemucca. The mood aboard the aircraft was celebratory. 10 million per year for 10 years would not only make them all multi-millionaires, but it would ensure the long-term survival of the company. When they landed back at the ranch, Darrell gave Jackie the good news! Their plane could easily make it non-stop to San Diego, so it would be fairly easy to commute back and forth. Darrell would have to see how the contract was written. They would probably bill the Government for air miles traveled, and if they made enough trips, that would just about cover the lease. When Darrell told Jackie how big the contract was, she told Darrell that there were 1,000 acres of prime grazing land for sale cheap directly behind them. If he wanted to, they could buy it, and raise a small herd of cattle. Manny could hire some of his relatives to work the ranch. It would be an excellent source of high-quality meat for the company, and they could sell the excess to recover costs. With that many acres, they could raise 100 head of cattle. Even if they butchered 30 of them a year, the herd would be self-reproducing, since each cow would have 5-6 calves in her lifetime, and a bull could handle quite a few cows. Manny used to run the cattle ranch up the road, so he was definitely experienced. Darrell thought it was a good idea, and told Jackie they could probably do it, once Jim had approved the contract, and he signed it.

The next morning Jackie felt like smacking herself again, she had forgotten to order the Kel-Tec SU-16 for her truck. She called the dealer in Winnemucca that handled the AR-15 order, and he said he could have one there in 3 days if RSR in Sparks had one in stock. He assumed they did, but just wanted to cover his 6 just in case. She ordered 10 more 20 round magazines for it, since they also fit the AR-15. She asked the dealer what bullet weight he would recommend, and he said the lighter bullets do better since it has a fast twist, and a civilian chamber. Jackie knew exactly which rounds she wanted. She asked if he had any 55gr JHP coyote rounds in stock. Since coyote hunting was popular, he had a case. She got 500 rounds on stripper clips, and another 500 of 55gr SPBT ammo. She would load 5 magazines of each. Next she asked if he had a small tactical case that the folded weapon would fit with ammo pockets. He said he had a bunch of tactical cases, and would size it when the gun came in. Jackie asked him how much the rifle would cost. He gave her an excellent price, since he didn't have to hold it in inventory, and RSR gave him 30-day billing. She agreed to the whole deal, and asked him to call her when the rifle was in. She called Manny and asked him if he wanted a Kel-Tec SU-16 for their truck. Since he knew the Corporation would pay for it, he said "Sure!" Jackie called the dealer back and ordered 3 of everything, and a case of the JHP and SPBT ammo instead of the 500 rounds. She figured Steve would want one in his truck as well, or they could put one in her CRV after she got the concealed compartment made.

Jackie called Manny again, and asked if he had a Cousin with a body repair shop. He thought she had dinged the truck already, so Jackie had to explain she had seen a diagram for a concealed compartment for the CRV. Manny laughed, and said "Getting into the Smuggling business, are we?"

Jackie laughed and said, "Not exactly, I just wanted a concealed spot to hide my BOB and a SU-16." Jackie smacked herself again mentally. If she wanted a SU-16., she would be far better off with a tactical vest instead of a daypack. She asked Manny what he thought of using a Tactical vest instead of a backpack.

"Jackie, if you're primarily carrying self-defense and emergency stuff, the Blackhawk raid vest is the best if you can locate the one that takes a Camelback, even better. You can still carry a daybag on the back with clothes and other stuff, but keep the essentials in your raid vest or the butt pack so you can drop the daybag if you have to E&E or move fast."

"Do you know where I can get a Blackhawk vest that takes a Level IIa insert?"

"Madre de Dios, what are you planning on Fighting WWII?"

"Nope, just surviving an armed assault on the compound or a SHTF scenario if I'm caught away from the ranch."

"OK, I'll check around for you - Wait a minute, didn't that letter authorize LEO gear?"

“Yeah, everything except FA and destructive devices. Maybe I should ask the Sheriff?”

Jackie grabbed her cell phone, and dialed the Sheriff’s station.

When he answered the phone, Jackie asked him where they could buy some Assault Vests with level IIA vests. The Sheriff responded the same way Manny did and Jackie explained it the same way to the Sheriff.

“OK, if you want a good Assault Vest with a Level IIA insert, I know a place that sells the Blackhawk LEO only model that takes a Level IIA vest with inserts, and is Camelback compatible. Problem is they are not cheap! With the inserts, they are over a thousand dollars each.”

Jackie did a quick mental calculation of how many vests they were going to need. “Sheriff, I could use 6 vests right now and 4 more if we get the rest of the board members de-programmed in time.”

The Sheriff was laughing at Jackie’s comment about de-programming. “So you need to wake up a couple of Sheeple?”

“Exactly! Any ideas?”

“A few, but they won’t be happy campers afterward, and if you don’t get the word beforehand that it’s a drill, some of my officers could wind up hurt.”

“I don’t think we need anything that drastic Sheriff! Manny is going to do his “Drill Sergeant from Hell” impersonation if they don’t get with the program.”

“Man, I’d love to be there to see the looks on their faces. You know I was in the Corps too!”

“Small world Sheriff. I’ll e-mail you the sizes and stuff. If you could expedite the order, I’ll pay whatever extra we need to get them ASAP - I don’t like the way the news has been lately, and I think we might be in for a TSHTF pretty quick!”

“Me too, I’ve been busy training my deputies in paramilitary techniques just in case. Who would have guessed that a sleepy little town like Winnemucca would have to worry about terrorist attacks, but we’re right on I-80 and anything going East from California has to come through us, or go South through Arizona.”

“Yikes, I never thought about that when we decided to move here!”

“I’m going to level with you Jackie, we’re on a prime invasion route, and I only have a couple of dozen deputies in the entire department, and 1/3 of them are going to retire in the next 5-10

years. Anyone decides to start something here; we would be in Deep Kimchee! If you guys want to arm yourselves to the teeth, I have no objections. Just don't try to use that letter to buy destructive devices. If you have any, I don't want to know about it. I'd get all your people armed and prepared for the worst. I'll try to e-mail you copies of Terrorism Alerts as I get them if I think they are a No-Sh*t alert instead of some intel squirrel panicking every time some Mullah starts rattling the Koran."

Jackie got off the phone, and by the look on her face, Manny knew the news was not good. "Que Paso? You look like you've seen a ghost!"

"Manny, I've just had my worst nightmare realized. The Sheriff just reminded me we are sitting astride a prime invasion route, and if any bad Sh*t happens, it has to go right through Winnemucca. We need to get everyone up to speed as soon as those AR-15's show up, and we need to escalate our plans to defend this ranch. The Sheriff as much told me that he didn't want to know if we had any destructive devices. That makes me think he thinks we should need them. I don't want to go out and buy RPGs or anything, but there has got to be something in that devious Jarhead mind of yours that we can use for Improvised Explosives or other safe area defensive devices."

Manny laughed, and looked at Jackie, she was as serious as a Heart Attack! That got him thinking in an uncomfortable direction. He desperately wanted to protect his family! The nightmare images of what would happen to them if a bunch of Terrorists got to them shook him to his core. Finally, he snapped out of it. "Jackie, I know a couple of tricks, but we are going to need some stuff that would give the ATF a serious hissy fit, and throw the lot of us into prison for a long stretch if they found out about it! Luckily, I have a bunch of cousins who know how to make some stuff we can use, and know how to keep their mouths shut."

"OK, Manny do it, and I'll find a way to pay for it without involving the corporation so the whole board doesn't wind up in prison. Just do it fast, I don't think we have more than a month!"

That got Manny going, and he pulled out his cell phone, and made a dozen rapid calls in machine-gun Spanish that Jackie barely followed, but what she heard scared her to the core. It seemed Manny had been planning for such an eventuality much longer than she had, but didn't have the funds to put his plans into operation. When he finished, Manny said that he would need \$10,000 in cash to cover all the materials. Jackie decided that she would make a run to town tomorrow and give Manny the cash. She went home and did some Internet surfing for some other ideas she had, and located local suppliers for what she needed. It was amazing what you could come up with in a farming community!

Reluctantly, she realized she needed to let Darrell know what was going on without giving him any details, so she walked into his office, and told him they needed to talk privately outside. When they were 100 yards away from the building, Jackie spilled the beans, leaving out the

details. Darrell took it amazingly well, especially since their plans included high explosives. Jackie assured Darrell the devices themselves were safe, but owning them was of highly questionable legality, so he didn't need to know the details, except she needed \$10,000 in cash to pay for it. She would withdraw the cash from their checking account. Darrell was just as scared as Jackie was, and gave her a big hug, and promised not to discuss this with anyone besides her and Manny. Jackie said they were better off keeping him out of the loop in case the ATF found out about it.

The next day, Jackie drove into town, cashed a \$15,000 check and went shopping. She paid cash for all her purchases, and loaded them in the truck. She was glad that the owners of the fertilizer stores weren't too curious, after all they did own a ranch. She bought some 4100 Fertilizer, and several boxes of rusty metal parts from the junkyard, mostly nuts and bolts. From another store she bought 30 3-ft sections of black iron pipe and caps. At another store she bought some model rocketry components, several hundred foot rolls of wire, and the large 6-volt lantern batteries. Finally at her last stop, she bought a large quantity of dynamite, and the owners didn't even bat an eye. She drove very carefully home, because she had enough explosives in the bed of the truck to blow her into orbit. She was smart enough to keep the model rocketry components separate from the rest. When she stopped at the ranch, she was perspiring heavily, and drank several quarts of water right out of the hose. Meanwhile, Manny walked up, and got a good look at the contents of her pickup.

"Madre de Dios - are you trying to blow us into orbit or what?"

"Not exactly Manny - I've got the makings of several remotely fired cannons and some other toys. Anyone who tries to mess with us will wind up Sushi!"

Manny had seen many IED's in his day, but this one was out of The Anarchist's Cookbook, and very deadly. Jackie filled him in on the details, and Manny crossed himself at least once during the discussion. Anything on the receiving end of these devices would have to be cleaned up with a sponge and a hose. She handed Manny the \$10,000 in cash, and got back into the truck to stash the stuff in an unused barn. She spent the rest of the week making the devices, and she kept as far away from everyone as possible. Manny had his cousins working on the fence line dig 30 short trenches, then after they had cleared out, Manny and Jackie carried the cannons one at a time to the trenches and set them in very carefully. Manny had a family to think of, so Jackie told Manny to get lost when she connected the devices to the wires, and ran the wires back to a central point, where the cousins had dug a 6-foot deep pit. Jackie carefully taped off the bare wire ends, and marked them as to which device they went to. Manny waited nervously for Jackie to re-emerge from the pit and walk toward the truck. He lost count of how many times he said the Rosary while he waited for her. Jackie was having a good effect on him, he was practicing his Catholicism more than ever before in his life since Desert Storm.

The next day, she got a call from the dealer, the SU-16's had shown up, so she drove into Winnemucca again to pick them up. This was getting OLD! When she got there, the dealer had

the SU-16s, cases, magazines, and ammo all ready to go for her. She gave him a corporate check, and filled out the paperwork. With her CCW, it was a formality. On the way home, she stopped at the Sheriff's office, walked into the Sheriff's office and told him she had something to show him. He walked out to the truck, and she handed him the cased SU-16. He immediately recognized it, and Jackie let him drool for a while. She asked him about carrying it concealed in her vehicle. He told her she wouldn't have any problem outside of Las Vegas with her CCW. Jackie mentally smacked her forehead, and told the Sheriff she needed 3 more CCW's. he put the rifle back into the case and back in the vehicle, then started filling out the paperwork for Darrell, Steve and Susan's CCWs. "Jackie, I'm working on faith here that you are certifying they are of good character and competent shooters."

"Darrell's my husband, Steve is his best friend who did two tours in the Air Force, and Susan is his wife. Steve is already a competent if rusty shooter, Darrell and Susan will be before I allow them to carry off Ranch property concealed. They should be up to speed within a week."

"That's good enough for me. OK if I come over tomorrow to go shooting?"

"Sure, we'll be waiting for you. If you hear gunfire, we started without you!"

The Sheriff started laughing, and said he would be there around noon - he had to put in a half-day on Fridays to keep the secretaries happy, otherwise the paperwork pile got too high. Jackie asked him about the vests and he said they had been ordered, and put on a RUSH status. They would be at the station next week with Level IIa inserts and both sets of chicken plates. Jackie thanked him for the help, shook his hand, and drove back to the ranch. She gave 1 SU-16 set to Manny and the other to Steve, then put hers behind the back seat of her truck, in a spot that some engineer must have envisioned a rancher would want to stash a truck gun, because it fit perfectly. She loaded half the mags with the JHP ammo, and the other half with the SPBT ammo, and marked the SPBT mags with a big S so she could tell easily which were which. Then she stuck 9 magazines inside the magazine pouches on the outside of the case and 1 JHP mag in the gun. As soon as the vests showed up, she would be good to go.

The next day, Manny was putting them through their paces, when the Sheriff drove up in his patrol vehicle, a huge Chevy Suburban that looked like Rambo had designed it. It had huge front and rear pipe bumpers, side nerf/step bars, a low profile law enforcement light bar, and enough antennas on it to tell anyone who didn't see the Sheriff's badge emblazoned on the sides that this was the Sheriff's personal vehicle. When he pulled up, he asked Manny to help him unload some boxes. Inside were the 6 HBAR AR-15's, the 2 AR-10Ts with the scopes already mounted and boresighted, and a present from the Sheriff, a case of SS-109 ammo for the AR-15's. He remembered what Jackie had said about the AR-15's and he had a case of unused SS-109 milsurp ammo he had gotten as part of the county's Homeland Security kit. Since none of their weapons had to correct twist to fire the heavier SS-109 ammo, it had sat there for years. Since Jackie's AR-15's were the newer ones with the correct barrel twist, they could shoot them just fine, so he decided to donate to the cause.

When they had uncased all the AR-15's, Jackie looked at the "observers" and several appeared ready to wet themselves. The Sheriff solved that problem real fast with a lecture.

He called all of them around and said to the whole group, "I know you're all from California except Manny, so I'll fill you in on a few things. First of all, it is perfectly legal to own most weapons in Nevada, including Full Auto or Suppressed weapons, as long as it remains legal under Federal Law. Every gun you have here is Semiauto, meaning the gun will only fire once for each pull of the trigger. Since it takes Military training to be able to use Full Auto without wasting ammo, these Semiauto weapons are the best you will probably need.

Folks, I'm not going to sugar coat it - You're over an hour away from town, and no deputies routinely patrol out this far, since we don't have the budget. Therefore you are on your own! If anything God forbid, should happen out here, you have to be able to defend yourselves for at least an hour, and maybe longer if we are tied up elsewhere. The deputies who will respond are armed the same way you are, so all they can do is add manpower. With the latest Terror threats, you need to know you are sitting right in the middle of their probable line of advance, meaning anything that happens in California either has to go through here or Arizona to get to the rest of the country. Terrorists are even better armed than you are, and entirely ruthless. They would kill you all without quarter, and rape any women, or even men left alive then kill them. Their brutality has to be experienced to believe. Manny and I have seen it firsthand, and still have nightmares over it! You have 2 choices, defend yourselves, or plan on dying painfully while watching your wives and children raped and murdered."

When the Sheriff ended his little speech, one of the "observers" raised his hand. The Sheriff knew what was coming, but decided to answer it anyway - he'd met his share of refugees from the PRC who were still Sheeple to the core, and needed a rude awakening.

"Sheriff, it says you are supposed to Protect and Serve - Shouldn't we dial 911?"

"Sir, around here, we call 911 "Dial a Prayer"! You're better off calling the 800 number for Pat Robertson's prayer line! If you had actually read the constitution and case law in school, instead of the BS the lying teachers were feeding you, you would know that the only time the police have any obligation to protect you is if you are in protective custody, otherwise we have no obligation to protect anyone. Besides, it would cost the county over \$10 million extra each year to increase patrols enough to have 1 deputy drive down the ranch road once a day. We could better use that money providing other services. All of the ranches out here are perfectly capable of defending themselves since the law says they can, they do. If someone breaks into your house and you shoot them, the DA won't even file charges against you unless there are serious issues that makes him suspect it wasn't justified homicide, but murder. You need to either wake up and get with the program, or you might as well move back to California or dig a grave now!"

Darrell spoke up next, "Guys we decided to move the business here for several reasons, we're

not asking you to become gun nuts, but you need to know how to defend yourselves, since Jackie and I might be busy elsewhere. This is a huge property for the 10 of us to defend, and we need everyone to be able to at least shoot a rifle. If you don't want to carry a pistol, that's your business, but I'm going to insist that you are competent with these rifles! We deliberately selected these rifles because they are easy for a beginner to use, and can hit a target out to 300 yards. Jackie and Manny will be busy engaging the distant targets, so that leaves the rest of us to cover everything else. So line up here and learn to shoot."

There was some grumbling, but they came forward. Manny had laid tarps and pads on the ground in front of the 100 yard line of the rifle range. They walked over to the range, and Steve went first. He was a much better shot with the AR-15 than the pistols, and hit 19 out of 20 of the 100 yard targets. Maria went next, and after a little coaching from Manny got into a comfortable Military prone position, then sighted through the C-more sight at the 100 yard target. All she had to do was put the red dot in the center of the target and squeeze the trigger. She too went 19 for 20 at 100 yards. Susan shot after her, with the same results. Darrell seemed a natural, and after hitting the 100 yard targets 20 for 20, asked if he could engage the 300 yard targets. Manny handed him another 20-round magazine, and went 15 for 20 since it took a couple of rounds to figure out the hold-over. Amazingly, one of the holdouts stepped forward, and Manny taught him how to shoot a rifle, how to assume a military prone position, and how to sight using the C-more red dot sight. When he finished, he handed the shooter a 20-round magazine, and he pulled back on the cocking lever and got ready to shoot. Amazingly, the red dot centered itself on the bullseye, and all he had to do was pull the trigger. The round hit dead center, and the shooter was hooked - Darrell was right, this was easy. By the end of his 20-round magazine, he was enjoying himself enough that he didn't want to stop. He'd have to make arrangements with Manny or Jackie to come out to the range more often! When he was finished, his buddies saw the grin on his face, and decided "What the heck" and gave it a try. They both turned out to be good shots. Manny thought to himself, "Not bad for a bunch of Computer Geek Sheeple!"

Finally it was Jackie's turn. She uncased her AR-10T with the big Simmons 3x12x50 AO scope. She could have bought a Leupold scope, but couldn't justify the cost of the scope when her rifle skills weren't good enough to take advantage of it. She set up on the 300 yard line, and went 10 for 10, then handed the AR-10T to the Sheriff, who surprised both of them by going for the reduced size 600 yard targets. He hit 8 out of 10, then confessed he was the designated sniper of his team when he was in the Marines, and the 600 yard targets were about the max he could hit with this setup. Next time he'd bring his Remington 700 with the Leupold scope and show them how it was done. Manny went last, and went 10-10 on the 300 yard line.

Jackie suggested those who wanted to shoot pistol could come with her over to the pistol range, and everyone that wanted to shoot their rifles could stay there with Manny. Jackie talked with Manny, and told him to leave his cell phone on, that both ranges were to be considered hot unless they talked to each other over the cell phones, and shut both ranges down. He agreed that was the safest way to do things. Jackie asked Susan and Darrell to come with her, Steve

and the Sheriff joined them, while everyone else stayed on the rifle range. By the end of the day, Jackie had Darrell and Susan shooting well enough for the Sheriff to tell them it was OK to carry concealed. Steve improved his shooting skills with every run through, and the Sheriff almost fainted when Jackie put on a shooting clinic like last time. Then she confessed to the Sheriff she was an NRA instructor for 10 years, and shot IPSC competition for several years. The Sheriff was no slouch with a pistol either, but wasn't in Jackie's league. He guessed when she shot IPSC she was an A bracket or Open class shooter. He talked to her after the session, and found out she shot both A bracket in Limited, and Open with a highly modified Para-Ord pistol. He asked her if she would mind coaching some of his deputies at the county range since they didn't have a full-time instructor. She readily agreed since it would give her something else to do since things were slowing down at the ranch, and would put her in the Sheriff's good graces. When the Sheriff finally left, they went home for Dinner, and Jackie gave Darrell a big hug. "You did a great job getting the "observers" off their duffs and shooting. Manny says you should have an AR-10 as well since you did so well shooting mine. OK if I buy another one?"

"Sure, go for it - that was fun, and another .308 means we can engage trouble much farther out."

Jackie could only feel Darrell's forehead then say "You feeling OK?"

Darrell laughed and said "It's still hard to believe that a little over a year ago I was a dyed-in the wool Liberal tree-hugger. I still hug the occasional tree, but like you said "Young Skywalker, your transformation to the Dark side is Complete!" I mean I even like red meat, I'm turning into a gun nut, and I've got a knife big enough to make Crocodile Dundee envious!" they both had a good laugh, then Darrell decided to make dinner. Jackie was glad, because she was dead on her feet. After dinner, they soaked in the hot tub for a while then went to bed.

Chapter 26

The next morning's meeting was interesting to say the least - all they could talk about was guns and shooting. Darrell's suggestion to make 1 hour per week of target practice mandatory was met with unanimous approval. Darrell had a hard time getting them focused back on business. Slapping the table with his hand did the trick, but his hand was sore for an hour. Darrell made a mental note to buy a gavel for next time. When they finally came to order, Jim made a rare appearance to discuss the new contract. The terms were very generous, and they could expense anything related to the project, including travel expenses, food, and lodging. Judging by how frequently they would have to be in San Diego, Steve motioned and Jim seconded that they lease a condominium in San Diego and expense it to the contract. Not a luxury condo, but something nice that would give the programmers and their wives a place to stay when in San Diego, so they wouldn't have to stay in a hotel for a week at a time. They voted on it, and it passed unanimously. Steve was designated the official "Condo procurement Committee" which brought a belly laugh from Darrell. They had vigorously resisted any bureaucracy in the company. Darrell was the President, and every other board member was a Vice President at large. All major decisions were discussed and voted on by the board. Jackie's title was Secretary for incorporation purposes, but she claimed her real title was Vice President in charge of Gopher's (Go-fer this, Go -fer that!) When all the contract issues had been discussed, they voted to approve the contract as written, which by the way had a \$1 Million bonus payment due upon signing. When Darrell pointed that out, and the fact that the 1,000 acres behind them was for sale cheap, they voted to buy the property with the \$1 million and go into the cattle business. Manny was put in charge, and given authority to hire anyone he needed to run the cattle ranch. They decided that since this was an official cattle ranch, it needed a name. Steve suggested they call it the "Dun Movin Ranch"! The resulting laughter indicated unanimous approval. Jim was asked to look into registering the name, and a brand for their cattle.

Meanwhile, Jackie was on the phone with the dealer that had supplied the AR-15's and asked for a rush order for another AR-10T with a Leupold scope. He told Jackie he could get one within a week. Jackie asked him if he could get any AP rounds for the .308. When he started protesting, Jackie reminded him that they had a LEO letter authorizing anything that wasn't full auto or a destructive device. That calmed him down a bit, and he admitted he had a case in stock. Jackie took the entire case, and another dozen magazines for the AR-10T. As soon as she got off the phone, the Sheriff called and said their Blackhawk raid vests were in. She said she would be right in to pick them up, called the dealer back and said she would pick up the AP in about an hour. She grabbed her purse, and checkbook, made sure her P-14 and mag case were where they belonged, and jumped into the truck. She stopped at the dealer first, who luckily had a roller ramp to load the case into the bed, or they both would have hurt their backs. Jackie stopped off at the Sheriff's office, and he grabbed a dolly since the box was huge and not exactly light. The anti-pilfer tape on the box was intact, and Jackie cut open the packing list, and was glad to see they had gotten the upgraded vests with the Camelback inserts. Between the two of them, they got the box into the back of the truck. The Sheriff asked her if she could

teach a class next week at the county range. He could pay her \$40.00 per hour door-to-door as a part time instructor. He said he had about 6 deputies who were good shots, but needed some coaching since they had barely qualified last quarter. He assured her they were motivated, because they faced termination if their shooting didn't improve. Jackie asked what weapon they were shooting. He said the issue weapon was the Glock 21, and most deputies used it since it was a 13 round magazine. 5 deputies had P-14 Limited because they preferred the 1911 cocked and locked action. All of these officers had Glock's.

Jackie was glad they had issued the Glock, because it was the easiest weapon to train inexperienced shooters with. The reason the ranch went with the P-14's was because Jackie preferred them, and they all should have weapons that took the same magazine so they could share mags if they ran out. The probability of that happening was slim to none, but Jackie didn't want to take the chance. Jackie asked the Sheriff if next Wednesday afternoon would be OK. He looked at his calendar, and all 6 deputies were working that day. "How's 1 o'clock. First training session should last no more than an hour or two, since 2 of the deputies have to be on patrol by 3:00, and the other 4 go off duty at 3:00."

"That will work great Sheriff. More than 2 hours at a time, and fatigue starts to be a problem. I'll see you at 1 o'clock Wednesday at the County range."

Jackie shook his hand and headed for the truck. When she got home, she asked Manny to help her unload the truck. He laid 2 ramps on the tailgate to help get the case of ammo and the big box out without killing their backs. They carefully slid the box and the case down the ramps, and Manny picked them up with the dolly and wheeled them into Jackie's basement, which was getting pretty crowded with all the ammo and stuff stored there. Jackie drove over to the fuel depot and filled up her truck. She noted the diesel tanks were half full, time to call the distributor and get them filled. Jackie drove back over to the office and asked Darrell about it. He said to have the receptionist order it for them. Jackie never had occasion to meet her before. No time like the present. She strolled over to the receptionist's desk. "Hi, I'm Jackie Hayes. Sorry I haven't met you before now."

"Jackie, My name is Sally Louis. Nice to meet you, is there anything I can do for you?"

"Actually, I needed to ask you to order more diesel, the tank is about half full."

"Thanks, I'll call right now. Darrell tells me you're quite a pistol shot, do you think you could teach me?"

"Sure, just come on over when we shoot each week, and I'll be happy to work with you. Do you own a gun?"

"Just a little .38 S&W Chief's special. I got a CCW years ago, and only shoot enough to qualify. Darrell says you guys all shoot .45's. I really wanted something bigger, but the little

.38 special fits nicely in my purse.”

Jackie looked at Sally, noticed their builds were similar, and she wore slacks as well.

“Sally, do you know what an IWB holster is?”

“Not really - why?”

“You and I have similar builds. Can you tell if I’m carrying a gun right now?”

“You’re carrying right now? I never knew!”

Jackie lifted her blouse just enough to expose the butt of her P-14, and quickly lowered it.

Sally stared and exclaimed, “With your shirt over it, I can’t see it, yet I know it’s there because you showed it to me. What kind of gun is it?”

Jackie didn’t want to strip in public so she walked into the restroom, and came back with the gun still in its holster and the magazine carrier. “Sally, I had both of these hidden in the waistband of my slacks.”

Sally’s eyes got bigger when she saw what Jackie was packing. “That looks like a big .45, are you sure I can shoot one?”

“Sally, the P-14 has less felt recoil than your little Chief’s special! It’s a bigger gun, and absorbs more of the recoil. Also the bigger grip gives you a better hold on the gun so it can’t twist in your hand. Let me talk to Darrell, and I might be able to do something for you.”

“Thanks Jackie, I’ll order the fuel, and see you tomorrow at the shooting range.”

Jackie walked back to Darrell’s office and sat down to wait for Darrell to get a break. When he came up for air and saw his wife sitting there, he was surprised since he didn’t hear her walk in. “Darrell, Sally might want a P-14. Can we order one for her from the Corporation, All she has is a little .38 Chief’s special in her purse. If anyone wants to harm you, she’s the first one in the line of fire, and I think she deserves something better.”

Darrell couldn’t resist Jackie’s argument, and told her to go ahead and order one for her, and bill the corporation. After all they were rolling in dough. Jackie walked outside Darrell’s office, dialed the dealer on her cell phone, and he said he had a P-14 Limited in stock. He figured that they would want more, so he ordered 4 extra guns, IWB holsters, double mag carriers, and 10 extra mags. Jackie said they would take 1 set and 2 spare mags for now, and might buy the rest in a week if the others decided they wanted one too. Not having anything better to do, she said he would be right over to pick it up. Jackie hung up, told Sally she was going into town, and

would be right back. 2 hours later, Jackie was back. She wished she got frequent flyer miles for all the trips to town.

She spent the rest of the day putting together the kits for the Raid vests, loading each vest with 10 20-rd mags, a complete E&E kit and FAK, and put a 4-liter Camelback bladder in the back compartment, made sure the drink tube was threaded properly then she substituted a positive on/off valve for the bite valve to prevent leaks during storage. She decided to make the butt packs next week when she went into town, since you couldn't draw from a IWB while wearing the vest, and she didn't like the cross-draw option for the pistol, she preferred the SAS thigh-riding holster, since it rarely got in the way. She remembered she needed to buy some Kabar knives since they probably would never need a LTC Kukhri out here, or know how to use it. She was sure Manny would prefer a Kabar, and Steve was probably familiar with it, or something close to it from his military duty. She was afraid the rest of them would be scared by a really big knife! She made a list of the supplies she would need to complete the butt pack/pistol belts for everyone else. When she was finished with that, she made dinner - talk about no rest for the weary!

The next day was target practice day, and everyone was looking forward to the break. Even the guys who originally didn't want to get involved were now shooting their AR-15's at the 100 yard range, and scoring hits regularly. Darrell had borrowed Jackie's AR-10T, and had become a good shot with it, at least out to 300 yards. The 600 yard targets were beyond his shooting ability, but he was getting better fast. Manny decided he needed practice too, and started on the 300 yard line to build up his confidence, then switched to the 600 yard targets, and said a few bad words in Spanish. When he got done, Maria walked over to him and said he would have to go to confession for that string of swear words. Manny hung his head, since he didn't know Maria was within hearing range, and he never swore in front of her or the kids. Manny gave her a hug and apologized. She was in a forgiving mood, and told him it was OK, just please watch his language. When Sally got done with work, she walked over to Jackie, who was running the pistol line. Susan was getting much better, and she was able to double tap a target and engage the next one just like Jackie, but much slower. Jackie wanted to teach everyone the "Failure to Stop" drill, since she wanted them to shoot that way all the time. They just might be up against bad guys wearing vests like theirs. She decided that the double tap would be a good start, then she'd teach them the FTS drill. When Susan finished, Sally walked up to Jackie and said "Hi". Jackie asked her if she'd like to learn to shoot a .45. Sally's smile said it all. Jackie walked over to the table, and took the P-14 out of its box, and showed Sally how the controls worked, then let her practice dry firing it at the targets until she was comfortable. Jackie loaded 2 mags while Sally was practicing, then when she was ready, she handed her a magazine. Sally kept the gun pointed at the ground in front of her with the slide locked open until she got to the shooting line, then released the slide, slammed a mag home, pulled back on the slide, and slid the safety to the safe position. Jackie looked around, and since the range was still "hot", just gave the command "clear to fire". Just like she had practiced, Sally brought the P-14 up from low ready, and the sights almost lined up by themselves. She swept the safety down with her thumb, and locked onto the target, as soon as the front sight steadied below the bullseye, she caressed the

trigger, since it was much lighter than her .38's trigger, and the gun boomed. She was surprised when she saw the round hit the bullseye. As soon as the gun came down out of recoil, she squeezed the trigger again. Another bullseye. She kept that up until the slide locked open. She had the biggest grin on her face Jackie had seen!

"That was fun, can I do it again. You're right, this bigger gun doesn't hurt my wrists like my little Chief's special does. The recoil seems like a soft push instead of a hard snap like my .38. I want one!"

"That's good, because Darrell authorized the corporation to buy one for you to use. As long as you work for the corporation, that gun is yours to use. I got you an IWB holster and a double mag carrier just like mine. That way you can have 3 14-round mags on tap if you need them."

"Why would I need 3 14-rd mags?"

"Sally, you're working for a highly classified Military project. The programs Darrell and the programmers are writing could revolutionize Naval warfare as we know it. Governments would love to kidnap Darrell or another programmer for the secrets in their heads. So far no one outside the Secretary of the Navy's office knows about this project. When they start Phase II, it will almost be impossible to keep the project a secret. Since you are sitting right up front, you'd be the first person in the line of fire if they got that far. The more firepower you have available, the better. I might even try to get you a NFA 14" shotgun."

"Holy Cow Jackie! Jim never told me that when he hired me, but I suspected. Thanks for telling me. I think the extra firepower might be an idea! What's a NFA shotgun?"

"NFA means National Firearms Act. It regulates the legal length of shotguns among other things. Shotgun Barrels can be no less than 18 inches long, and the overall gun, in firing condition, cannot be less than 26 inches. Several manufacturers made special shotguns for the Police to use for Witness Protection and other specialized duties which conceal almost as easily as a long-barreled revolver. Winchester called their NFA shotgun the Witness Protection Special, but several manufacturers make one. I can order one with our LEO letter from the Sheriff, and get a custom holster made to fit it to the inside of your desk. It would give you 4 rounds of 00 buck shot as quick as you can pump the action, and the barrel is only 14 inches long, so it is real compact. 4 rounds of 00 buck will ruin anyone's day. If you want one, I'll order it!"

Sally was as scared as she had ever been in her life - what had she gotten into!

Jackie saw the fear in her eyes, and decided it might be a good idea to calm her down a little.

"Sally, anyone who wants to get to you or Darrell has to get through at least 3 layers of security, and everyone outside is always armed, so anyone that got to the office would have lost the

element of surprise, and probably would have their numbers cut down significantly. you're the 2nd to last like of defense for the programmers. Darrell carries a .45 just like mine, and is getting to be a pretty good shot. Since you both are armed, your odds are pretty good. Also, I'm going to see about installing a Kevlar panel in front of your desk that will stop anything up to .308 caliber fire. You'll probably never need it, but it will give you something to get behind if they make it that far.

Sally went back to shooting with a vengeance; she realized that her survival would depend on her shooting skills, instead of just waving a gun at a mugger like she thought she could do when she bought the .38 Chief's Special.

"Sally, this time I want to practice double-tapping. That's two quick shots to the kill zone. We've got all afternoon, and a bunch of ammo, so have at it."

100 rounds later, Sally was getting off a good double tap, and both rounds were hitting the kill zone.

"OK, now I want you to start at the left-most target, double tap it, move 1 target right, double-tap it, etc. until you're out of ammo."

After about 3 magazines, Sally had that drill down well. She was a pretty good shooter for a beginner!

Jackie noticed Sally was beginning to visibly tire, so she called a halt to the shooting session.

"Sally, you have a CCW, right?"

"Got it 10 years ago when I worked for a Divorce Attorney. I figured someone would get mad at him, and decide to shoot him in the office."

"OK, let's reload 3 mags with these JHP defensive rounds, and follow me."

Jackie walked back to the office, since it was closer, and told Sally she was going to show her how to put on the IWB holster and the mag carrier. Then they walked into the ladies room, which was bigger than some apartments. Jackie had Sally loosen her belt, then told her to take the holstered P-14 and slide the holster inside her waistband, but outside her underwear. When she did that, Jackie told her to slide the holster around behind her right kidney, then she handed her the mag carriers, and had her put them in front of her left kidney. When they were in place, Jackie told her to tighten her belt, then lift slightly on the holster until she felt a click. The ears on the bottom of the clip caught her belt, and locked into place. When the mag carriers did the same, she was set. Jackie told her to pull her blouse down outside over her waist, and always wear her blouse out while she was carrying. Jackie said it was easier to do this in the morning when she was getting dressed by putting the holsters on the belt first then slipping on

the pants. Sally gave Jackie a hug and thanked her for taking the time to teach her. Jackie said she wanted Sally to practice each week when everyone was shooting. She said sure - OK.

Jackie then went home to make dinner, she was sure Darrell would be hungry when dinner was ready.

Chapter 27

The next morning, Jackie was back at putting the kits together, when she realized she had a case of SS-109 penetrator rounds. She took 3 AR-15 20-rd mags, loaded them full of SS-109 rounds, then marked them with a red marks-a-lot indelible marker with a big diagonal slash on the sides, and a stripe on the bottom. She went out to the SU-16's and switched mags so each 1 had a mag full of SS-109s. You never knew when you might need to punch through some bodywork or light metal. She then loaded 6 mags with the SS-109's and marked them the same ways, and replaced 1 of the mags of SPBT ammo in each vest. She took the .308 AP ammo and filled 3 mags for the AR-10T, and put a black stripe across the mags. Jackie had all her specialty ammo marked, and the vests loaded. Then she took out the "chicken plates" and set them on top of the vests. 3 of the vests were configured for the AR-10T and the rest for the AR-15. She wished she could slip a frag in the front pockets, but she didn't have any, and the Sheriff would have kittens! Jackie sat down and made a list of what she would need to complete the kits, and remembered she needed a gun safe, since she didn't have one. She didn't need the big heavy ones, a Homak safe would work perfectly. She had the perfect spot in the office building to put it, right next to the supply cabinets, so unless someone could recognize a Homak gun safe, they'd just think it was another supply cabinet, since all their cabinets locked. When she finished the list, she called the Sheriff, and asked if he knew where she could get this stuff in town. He told her of a surplus store owned by an old geezer, and if she could charm his socks off, he would probably sell her everything on her list for a killer deal. Jackie decided she would wait until tomorrow to go to town since she had to teach a class anyway.

When she was finished, she grabbed a couple of boxes of .45acp, and walked out to the range. She was pleasantly surprised to see Darrell and Sally were shooting, and when Susan heard all the commotion, she came over too. They were all practicing FTS drills. Jackie could see they had taken her lessons to heart. They were taking turns shooting and reloading. Jackie unloaded her defensive ammo, and loaded 3 magazines of practice ammo. She decided to try a FTS from the 25-yard line. After everyone was done shooting, she backed everyone out until they were clear, and stepped up to the line. Darrell said "Go" and she dropped her hands from the surrender position, cleared leather, and started ringing steel. She did a combat reload and kept going. When the slide locked open on the second mag, she loaded the third and did a series of head shots to all 14 targets. Darrell was amazed that anyone could shoot that good, but it gave him something to measure up to. When Jackie was finished shooting, she reloaded her self-defense ammo and resumed the role of coach. Darrell was heeling a bit, and she corrected that. She noticed that Susan had a slight flinch, so she told her to do some dry firing, and she stopped flinching. Sally was the one who amazed her, she was nailing the 15-yard targets with her FTS drill like Bat Masterson. Jackie wanted to talk to her big time, but didn't want to interrupt the session. She had seen that look of determination before in female shooters, and they either got a grip on their emotions, or they burned out. Finally when they were done, Jackie took Sally aside and had a girl-to-girl talk with her. Jackie had scared her worse than she thought she had. She did her best to put things in perspective, and she hoped Sally saw the

light. She'd have to see how she reacted next week. Darrell beat her home and decided to make dinner. When Jackie got home, she was surprised by the smell of carne asada cooking. "Yum, that smells good!"

Darrell turned and said, "Dinner will be ready in a minute, can you set the table?"

Jackie set the table, and noticed a 6-pack of Coronas in the freezer - she was in for a long tiring night! She was just grateful Darrell didn't take Viagra! After dinner, they took off their clothes and went skinny dipping in the hot tub. Jackie was glad when Darrell was worn out later that evening; she had a class to teach tomorrow.

Jackie woke the next morning to the smell of fresh brewed coffee. At least when Darrell wore her out, he made breakfast in the morning to give her another half-hour of blissful sleep. He made one of his famous Veggie Omelets, with toast and juice. Jackie poured herself a huge mug of coffee and drank it black while Darrell put the finishing touches on breakfast. Darrell was telling her something about making an offer on the property behind them, and Jim thought the owners might accept \$300 an acre since they were in bankruptcy, and the court was about to order the sale of the property. Jim said he would call today if he heard anything. Jackie asked Darrell if he had talked to Manny about running the ranch. Manny had told Darrell he had a couple of cousins who could help, and his Son was capable of running the farm by himself, and Manny's other sons would help. Manny knew where he could buy some excellent cattle fairly cheaply, since the rancher was going out of business, and he didn't want to slaughter his cattle yet, since he had a large number of heifers and yearlings that weren't up to weight yet, and several bulls and mature breeding cows, some of which were already pregnant. In all, he had about 100 head of cattle. Darrell had asked Manny to find out what he wanted for the whole herd. Jackie was impressed - this ranch thing was moving along quickly. Manny had located a cousin with a dump truck, and they had started dumping loads of dry horse manure on the cleared lots that were going to be the farm. When they were finished, Manny would till the manure in, and let it mature. He had an idea for worm farming to make their own humus soil, and they needed to build a small steel building with good ventilation and heating during the winter, since the worms worked best in a fairly narrow temperature and humidity band. They could eat all the leftovers from the garden, and turn it into good soil, then they could sell the mature night crawlers as bait, or if they wanted to raise chickens, dry and pulverize their bodies and make chicken feed out of it. Jackie thought it was a good idea, then remembered how bad chicken ranches smelled. She'd have to talk to Manny to make sure the chickens were done on a small scale to keep the smell down. She'd prefer egg layers to chickens raised for their meat. Jackie and Darrell weren't big pork eaters, so they weren't interested in raising pigs.

Darrell went to work, and Jackie left just before noon to teach her class at 1 o'clock at the County range. She arrived at 12:45, and was the first one there. 5 minutes later, the students started showing up, and guess who was there - Mr. Costco! She was surprised to see him there, but figured since he was probably a probationary deputy he was really on the bubble if he was having problems qualifying. When everyone was there, she gathered them around, and told

them, “OK, the Sheriff hired me to help you deputies shoot. I’m not normally a police instructor, but I am a certified NRA instructor with 10 years of experience, plus I shot IPSC open class for 2 years. I can’t answer any police policy questions regarding shooting, but what I can do is improve your basic shooting skills. I need you to move to the firing line, but stand back a little bit - I want to show you what I’m talking about. Everybody get their eyes and ears on. While they got ready, Jackie reloaded 1 magazine with practice ammo, and walked over to the 25-yard shooting line. 5 FBI Q-targets were already on backers in front of a sand berm. She checked to make sure the range was clear, then turned to make sure everyone had eyes and ears on. Then she turned back to the targets, slowly raised her hands to the Surrender position, and suddenly her hands snapped down as she pulled her P-14 from her IWB holster, and proceeded to double tap all 5 targets then return to put a head shot in each of them. When her slide locked open, she safed her weapon, put it on the table, and took her hearing protectors off. When she turned and looked at her students, they were standing openmouthed. She had just unloaded a 14 round magazine in a little over 5 seconds, and it was pretty clear even from the 25 yard line that all the rounds were in the kill zone of the target. She motioned them forward with her to check the targets, and they were really flabbergasted. Not only were the rounds in the Kill zone, but the first round of each double tap was in the x-ring, and the head shot was in the x or 10-ring. “Now that little shooting demonstration has absolutely nothing to do with police shooting, unless you’re getting attacked by 5 really stupid bad guys, but it shows you that level of shooting skill is possible. OK, if you can put fresh paper on the targets, we’re ready to start. First I want every one of you to shoot a qualification string so I can see where you are, and then I can hopefully help you shoot better.

Mr. Costco went first, and Jackie could read his badge as he went by, his name was Deputy Williams. He stepped to the 25-yard line, and everyone put their eyes and ears on. He stood square to the target, and shot 15 rounds at the target. When they walked up to look at his groups, it looked like he had shot at it with a sawed off shotgun with a bad doughnut problem. Not a single round in the 9-ring or better. Jackie was watching him shoot, and he had a pronounced flinch. Every time the gun was about to go off, she could see his facial expression change, and his barrel twitched like the end of a fishing rod. Jackie knew a nervous shooter when she saw one. Hopefully she could cure his shooting problems, but he would take a while. One by one, the deputies went up to the line. None of them would have qualified the way they were shooting, some had mechanical problems that could be easily fixed, and one had a major chip on his shoulder, and a lousy attitude. He was the most senior deputy of them all, and was probably nearing retirement, and didn’t like being there, and definitely didn’t like a woman telling him what to do. She knew she could help, but not if he didn’t listen. She’d try, then she’d ask the Sheriff to try to get him to listen to her. She knew that if he didn’t qualify, and had to retire early, his family would suffer, since he would be giving up a lot of pension money if he retired early. She genuinely liked cops, and had trained women cops before. She’d have her work cut out for her here.

She decided to work with Mr. Costco first. “Deputy Williams, follow me!” Jackie walked forward to the 15-yard line, and handed him a quarter. He was confused to say the least until

she explained that she wanted him to do 10 dry fires without the quarter falling off his gun. She was doing some one-on-one training now, since she knew that worked best. He safed his weapon, and manually cycled the slide, then Jackie put the quarter on his slide, it almost immediately fell off. “Deputy Williams, you need to calm down, or that quarter will never stay put. Stop, take a couple of deep breaths, and focus. When he got calmed down, she tried it again, and she heard a “click” and the quarter was still there. When he had done it 10 times successfully, she told him “OK, now I want you to do some live fire, and pretend that quarter is still there. He loaded a 13-round magazine, cycled the slide, and almost put the quarter back on the slide until Jackie stopped him. Then he chuckled, of course, the recoil would throw the quarter into the next county! He settled down some more, and his next group was 1/3 the size of the previous one, and most of the rounds were in the 10-ring or better. Jackie had him shoot 3 more groups like that, and slowly moved him back until he was on the 25-yard line. His next group would have qualified easily - problem solved.

“Deputy Williams - when you are shooting - pretend there is a quarter on your slide, and you’ll never have a flinch problem again. You’re free to go, or you can watch the rest.”

Since he had to be on duty at 3:00, he elected to go, but not after he told Jackie Thanks, and shook her hand. The next 3 shooters had simple mechanical problems involving grip or stance, and were quickly solved. The last one, Sergeant Kennedy, was going to be a real problem. When she dismissed the rest of them, she sat down and talked to the older deputy in a very respectful but no-nonsense tone. “Sergeant Kennedy, you’re a few years away from retirement. I’d hate it for you to not get your full retirement, so I’m going to do whatever it takes to help you shoot better. I can tell you’re not happy being here, and probably don’t like having a woman for a shooting coach, but I’m all you’ve got! You can either work with me, or you might not qualify, and I don’t want that to happen.”

“Mrs. Hayes, I’m sorry - I used to be a very good shooter, but my vision isn’t what it once was. I can’t see the target like I used to!”

“Thanks for telling me - you know they make prescription shooting glasses, and no one needs to know, since you obviously don’t need to see any better to drive. Do you have access to the internet?”

When he said he did, but the optometrist in town was a big blabbermouth, Jackie suggested going to Reno to get an eye exam, and ordering a set of prescription shooting glasses over the internet. She was sure they could do that with a set of Gargoyles, which would look way cool too! Sergeant Kennedy had a big smile on his face when he realized that he could do that. Jackie suggested that if the optometrist suggested he wear glasses full time, he could wear the gargoyles on duty, since everyone would assume he was just having a second childhood, instead of being blind as a bat! The Sergeant had to admire Jackie, she was sneaky like his wife. Jackie suggested since they had time left, they move to the 15-yard line where the targets were easier to see, and she’d watch him fire a string to see if there was anything else she needed to work

with. Sergeant Kennedy readily agreed, and soon they were standing on the 15-yard line, Jackie was watching him, not the target. She spotted a few things, and his groups confirmed it. She asked him “You used to shoot a revolver, didn’t you?”

“How can you tell?”

“Your groups look like you’re gripping the GLOCK like a revolver. OK if I adjust your grip?”

“Sure Mrs. Hayes, go ahead.”

Jackie came up on his left side, moved his grip around until his wrist was more in line with the barrel, and moved his hand slightly up on the grip. When she was finished, she told him to shoot a second group without changing his grip. The next mag was well centered, and a few rounds were even in the x-ring.

“OK, Sergeant Kennedy, as soon as we get you those prescription shooting glasses, you should be good to go. Now go ahead and shoot a couple more groups since we have time to kill. Jackie walked off the shooting line and grabbed her cell phone. “Sheriff, its Jackie - problem solved. Any problem if one of your deputies shoots with prescription shooting glasses?”

“Not at all - thanks Jackie, I’ve been trying to get Sergeant Kennedy to go to an optometrist for years, how did you do it?”

“Simple, I suggested he go to one in Reno, and order a set of prescription shooting glasses over the internet. Gargoyle and some other manufacturers can do prescription lenses or inserts. No one needs to know, correct?”

“Just between you me and the Sergeant - Thanks Jackie. Talk to you later!”

Jackie walked back to the shooting line, and the Sergeant had a big grin on his face. His last group reminded him of when he was in his prime. “Thank You Mrs. Hayes. I assume you told the Sheriff I needed glasses?”

“Just to shoot Sergeant. If you’re comfortable driving without them, that’s your call. I’ll probably be needing prescription shooting lenses in a few years myself. I have to use a scope to shoot a rifle outside of 100 yards, and 25 yards is about my limit for pistol. I think most of my pistol shooting is muscle memory anyway since I have been doing it the same way for so long. OK, Sergeant, see you in a few weeks when you get your shooting glasses.”

The Sergeant left to go home, since he was off duty at 3:00 pm. Jackie picked up her stuff, and reloaded her mag with defensive ammo, and holstered her gun.

She got in the truck and drove over to the Surplus store. The owner was what someone had

described as a “Crusty Old Curmudgeon”, and was rarely pleasant to anyone. Jackie turned on the charm, and soon had him talking about his military service. It seemed he had seen 2 tours of duty in Vietnam, and knew a thing or two since he was a retired USMC Gunny. The rest of the day, she addressed him by his proper title “Gunny”! She showed him the list of stuff she wanted, and he was very helpful, making suggestions, and pulling stuff out of inventory that he didn’t keep up front. She was amazed by what he had in his inventory. She joked he’d probably have a working BAR back there if he had an FFL! Gunny laughed at that, and said, “You never know!” An hour later, she had several boxes full of stuff. He gave her a killer deal on the gear, since most of it was in his inventory for years, and selling it would make his dear wife happy, since she was tired of having to inventory it each year. She thanked Gunny and he told her to stop by anytime, it was a pleasure to talk to a nice young lady. Jackie shook her head and laughed “Once a Marine, always a Marine!”

Just as she was going to get in the truck, the gun dealer called and said the AR-10T was in with the scope and mags. Jackie said she would be right over to pick it up. 15 minutes later, she was at the dealer, filled out the paperwork, and was about to write the check when she half jokingly asked if he had any NFA shotguns. After catching his breath, and remembering that they had a LEO letter, he admitted he had 2 Mossberg Model 500 NFA conversions in stock that were ordered by a police agency, but never picked up. Jackie asked if she could see them. The dealer closed and locked the door, then walked back in the back of the store with Jackie in tow. He opened a walk-in vault, and there were rows upon rows of Title III weapons. He didn’t advertise that he was a Title III dealer, since his only customers for this kind of equipment already knew he had it, and advertising only made him the target of kooks and wanabees. He took two very small shotguns down off a rack, they both had 14 inch barrels, and 3-shot magazines, plus 1 in the chamber. Instead of a pistol foregrip, they had a plate in front of the magazine to keep the hand behind the barrel. They had been extensively reworked, and the Mossberg plastic safety had been replaced by a steel unit. There were no sights on this weapon, since there was no point for them, these guns were designed for up-close and personal work. Jackie asked how much he wanted for them, and since he had them in inventory for years and wanted to get rid of them, he made her a killer deal. Jackie bought 2 boxes of Federal Tactical 9-pellet 00 Buck as well. She asked if he had a case to carry them in - no sense freaking out the Sheeple! He gave her 2 inexpensive cases no charge. The NFA paperwork was extensive, and he took a copy of their LEO letter he had in his files and attached it to the NFA paperwork. She wrote one check for the whole amount, and loaded the pickup.

When she got home, she drove over to the office and showed the shotgun to Sally, who thought the little shotgun was cute! Obviously, she had never seen a Witness Protection Shotgun in action - Cute was NOT how Jackie would describe it! Lethal, or Deadly, maybe! Jackie fashioned a scabbard for the shotgun out of scrap leather, and taking her rivet gun and a drill, mounted it to Sally’s desk after work. She loaded the shotgun, cycled the action, and topped it off, then stuck it in the scabbard. Jackie told Sally on her way out the shotgun was where she said it was, and it was ready to shoot, all she had to do was slide the safety on top of the receiver back and pull the trigger. Jackie highly recommended holding on with both hands when she

pulled the trigger. When Sally asked why, Jackie explained it kicked more than a .44 Magnum, but if she needed it, she highly doubted she would notice the recoil. Jackie was wondering where the other NFA shotgun could go. She thought it would make a good hideout gun for the truck, but was wondering how she could hide it from prying eyes, and still have access to it. She decided to ask Manny. She called him on his cell phone, and he drove the tractor over in a few minutes. When she showed him “Little Thumper” as she called it, Manny was sure Jackie’s train had gone chugging around the bend. The last time he saw a shotgun like that, it was the personal weapon of an old Gunny who was the point man for a recon team in Vietnam. “Madre de Dios, Jackie, what are you thinking?”

“Sally really needed one as a desk gun just in case we couldn’t stop an assault before it made it to the office. Her .45 is a nice weapon, but the NFA shotgun would definitely ruin the day of anyone who came through that door with the intent of harming her or Darrell. The dealer in town had 2 left, and made me a killer deal because he wanted to get rid of them. I wanted to put this in the truck where I can get to it, but I don’t know where to put it where it wouldn’t be seen.”

“OK Jackie, I don’t see the need for that cannon, but if you want one in your truck, you should put it in rubberized clips under the driver’s seat. Now that I think about it, that would make one heck of a Anti-carjacking weapon! To bad it’s illegal as heck in California - because that’s where you’d really want to have one!”

“Manny, it would come in handy in Reno too, or if TSHTF, you never know. Anyway, thanks for the suggestion, I’ll get some rubberized clips and rivet them to the seat frame.”

“Jackie, I’d rivet them to the floor, there isn’t much to hit on the seat frame. Just made sure you don’t adjust the seat back too far, or it would be visible.”

“Thanks Manny, Hasta La Vista Baby!”

“You know, All you need to become the Terminator is a GE Minigun!”

“I’ll be Back!”

Manny walked away shaking his head about the “Gringa Loca!”

Chapter 28

Everyone at the Ranch was preparing for the upcoming Thanksgiving Holiday. Jackie had gotten an alert from the Sheriff of increased chatter indicating a Terrorist strike sometime between Thanksgiving and Christmas. Jackie took the threat seriously, and upgraded the security around the ranch. Darrell had purchased the additional 1,000 acres for 300 an acre, and Manny had arranged the delivery of 120 head of cattle, including 20 market steers which would be ready for slaughter in the fall. Manny had some good news. The previous owners had run cattle on the property up to 3 years ago, and it was still fenced. He hired a couple of “cousins” to work the ranch, and they decided to drive in for now, since they already had houses on nearby ranches. Their parents were the ranch managers, and they needed to work elsewhere to bring in some money to eventually buy their ranch, or relocate to another area and start a family. Jackie was just glad to see the ranch operating. The well digger came in to bore a couple of wells and install windmill pumps and stock tanks for the cattle. The fields were lush and green, so they had plenty of feed for the summer. Manny said they needed to place an order for enough alfalfa for the winter, and a pole barn to hold it. Some ranchers just tarped their alfalfa, but they had enough money to do it right. Manny also got Darrell to buy a trailer and fork-lift attachment for the tractor to make feeding the cattle during the winter easier. Manny asked if they wanted horses or 4x4 ATVs to ride and check out the herd. Darrell and Jackie both thought that horses would be more economical and environmentally friendly, so Manny ordered 4 good quarter horses, and built a pipe corral and shelter for them. They were normally turned out to feed around the property during the day, and the farm was fenced in to keep them out. Manny had already checked the property, and there wasn’t any loco weed or other plants that could harm them.

Jackie made a run to Reno to stock up on staples, and a few other things. One of her purchases set the corporation back over 5 grand, but would come in real handy for 2-legged or 4-legged varmints. Since all the AR-10T scopes were on QD mounts, she bought a 3rd generation US Night Vision Scope with a QD mount that fit the rail on the AR-10T. She’d loved to get a suppressed rifle, but couldn’t justify the cost. Darrell nearly had a cow until she took him out after dark to the shooting range and mounted the scope to the AR-10T. he could see the targets nearly as well as during the day, and it was dark out with maybe a quarter moon. Darrell changed his tune when Jackie explained they might need to shoot coyotes that came after the calves, or shoot two-legged varmints that came after them at night.

Thanksgiving Day was a big celebration at the Ranch. They set up tables in the office, and everyone brought a dish. Maria brought several Mexican dishes, and everyone else brought traditional Thanksgiving dishes. Jackie spent the whole morning cooking two huge turkeys, good thing she bought the commercial stove/range since they both fit easily. The next day was the day after Thanksgiving, the biggest shopping day of the year. Jackie had to go back to town early that morning to teach another class. She turned on the radio to hear of multiple suicide bombers attacking malls. Jackie immediately called the Sheriff, whose phone was ringing off

the hook. They weren't on RED alert, since Winnemucca was such a small target, but they were on the lookout for any Middle Eastern looking men, since there were very few in Winnemucca, and they owned the fleabag hotels, and kept to themselves. When Jackie got on I-80 to head to Winnemucca, she spotted a huge Ryder truck that looked suspiciously overloaded. She accelerated to catch up, and noticed there was only 1 driver in the vehicle. He looked just like the Iranian who had tried to rape her at Berkeley, and had settled for her purse when she almost knocked him senseless by throwing it at him and running. Thinking fast, Jackie dialed the Sheriff's personal number. He immediately dispatched 2 of his deputies, and told Jackie that since she was a Reserve Deputy, she could try to stop the vehicle without shooting the driver, just in case he was legitimate. She floored the truck, and was soon exceeding 100 miles an hour, then pulled off an overpass 3 miles ahead of the truck. She took her SU-16 out of it's case, unfolded it, and loaded the 20-round magazine of SS-109 ammo. Using the hood of her truck for a rest, she waited until the truck had cleared the overpass, and sighted in on the back of the truck. If there was an ANFO bomb in the truck, she'd find out soon enough, and if not, the county might have to repair the damages. She sucked the butt of the rifle up tight, and using the open sights, steadied on the back door of the truck. Squeezing the trigger as rapidly as she could, she ripped off a quick burst, and after the 5th round, the concussion from the fireball blew her on her back, and rocked the truck.

When she woke up, the deputy was standing over her. Luckily it was Sergeant Kennedy. "Jackie, that was either the dumbest or the bravest thing anyone had done. Do you realize that if you had been another 100 or so feet closer, you'd be seriously injured or dead now? As it is, the truck took the majority of the blast damage. You're going to need a new paint job to fix those scorch marks." The Sergeant helped her back up, and helped her bandage numerous minor cuts from the blast, and landing on the roadway. Meanwhile, Sergeant Kennedy called the Sheriff on his cell phone, he didn't want this to go out over the air, since everyone had a scanner. The Sheriff got onto the Internet, logged onto the LEO-only section of the Homeland Security website, and warned everyone to BOLO for any Ryder or U-haul trucks that were driven by Middle Eastern men headed toward Cities. The Sheriff had rightly guessed this Raghead Terrorist was headed for Salt Lake City, since he had bypassed the turnoff that would have taken him to downtown Winnemucca. Actually his target was the Mormon Tabernacle and Temple Square in downtown Salt Lake City. Law Enforcement all over the US received his urgent e-mail in time to intercept half of the trucks. Some Police Officers died in the process, since they had a suicide switch in case they were stopped. When that piece of info hit the internet, any Middle Eastern man driving a big rental truck was shot without warning. No one ever found out how many of them were innocent civilians. As soon as Jackie was comfortable to drive, she drove back to the Ranch, and called Darrell on the Cell Phone, she said "Red Alert - Terrorists are attacking the US!"

Darrell couldn't believe it, and Jackie finally told him to turn on the TV. She hung up, and called Manny. Since he was a Retired Marine, he knew a No-Sh*t warning when he heard one, and sounded the alarm. Darrell was still looking at the TV when Manny pushed the "panic button" which sounded a surplus Air Raid Siren that sounded all over the compound. When she

got home, Manny had distributed the AR-15s and the vests. She quickly slipped into hers, and grabbed her AR-10T. Since they were attacking the Big Cities only, they felt relatively safe, but very vulnerable. So far none of their detectors had indicated any abnormal activity. Maybe they weren't the target. Manny made a decision to stand down from Red Alert, and assume Condition Yellow, where everyone would be armed, but still able to perform daily activities, except they were all restricted to the ranch property. Jackie had locked the gate on the way in, and had set a hidden switch that would blow a huge anti-personnel mine if anyone opened it without switching off the circuit. No one got any work done the rest of the afternoon, since they were glued to their TV's. Every major city in the US had at least 1 suicide bomber attack in their malls. The death toll was somewhere between 100 thousand and a million, with the injured to be estimated at 10 times that number. Half the truck bombs were stopped, but the other half were targeted against major churches and synagogues. They attacked the biggest ones for symbolic reasons, and the American Public got the message loud and clear. Moslems who had lived in the US for decades were suddenly suspect, and thousands of innocent Moslems were killed by vigilantes, until the police and military surrounded the Moslem enclaves to prevent any further attacks. They still arrested anyone remotely associated with a secret list that Homeland Security had generated from intercepts of conversations, and good old fashioned snitches. They were held as Enemy Combatants, so they were outside US law.

The next day there was a mass exodus of Moslems from the US. Evidently their adopted country didn't want them. They weren't really mad at the other people, they were mad at the Terrorist Idiots who thought they could attack US Churches and not expect retaliation. The families of suspected terrorists were shunned by other Moslems, and some even were killed by other Moslems, since they "knew" that their relatives were involved. President Bush was about to declare Martial Law, but Colin Powel told him not to- that the National Guard and Police were getting a handle on it.

Little did they know, this was just Phase I!

Chapter 29

The next day, when he had got confirmed fatality and causality figures, George W. Bush was so mad that several people had heard him say “Let’s Nuke them all, and Let God Sort them out!” Colin Powell strenuously objected. “Mr. President. If you did that, you’d be guilty of genocide to a degree that would make Hitler look like an amateur.”

“Colin, what do you remember about the Crusades?”

“Just what I read in the history books, most of it made the Christians sacking the Holy Land out to be the bad guys.”

“You know that centuries before, the Moslems attacked Southern Europe, and controlled large parts of Spain, and had spread their influence into Europe. Their savagery made Genghis Kahn look like a nice guy. We’re talking Rape, Murder, looting pillaging, etc. and all in the name of Allah! They were on their Jihad, and this time there was no one in the Middle East to stop them. The Jews were overrun and slaughtered. All that Moorish architecture you see in Spain was the direct result of conquest and occupation of the area by Black Muslims. In other words - they started it! If they had been satisfied with messing with the Middle East, there would have never had been the Crusades, which was an attempt by the Church to wrest control of the Holy Land from “Those God-forsaken Heathens”, and in reality was an attempt to cut the Moslem hordes down to size and save Christianity.

Ever since then, the Muslims have tried to spread their religion via the Sword in Jihad, or Holy War. They believe that if they die in a Jihad, they go straight to paradise, and I have half a mind to help them! This is just another part of the ongoing battle between Moslems and Christians. In a way, it’s sad, because according to the Bible, we share the same father - Abraham. It’s like Cain and Abel all over again. Will they never let us co-exist? I was talking to the Joint Chiefs, and do you know how many good soldiers died in Desert Storm I and II, plus the current occupation of Iraq? I’ll tell you one thing, it makes me mad enough at those ungrateful duplicitous SOBs to seriously consider nuking the lot of them! Take the Saudis for example. We supply all the weapons and manpower to defend their little kingdom, and yet every chance they get, they’re raising oil prices, and giving the money to Al Qaeda and other Muslim Terrorist organizations. And the Iraqis - you think they’d be grateful we got rid of Saddam Hussein for them, then as soon as he’s gone, they start attacking US! Well Scr*w Them! I’m recalling all forces in the Middle East right now under executive order, and I won’t let you talk me out of it! I’m still considering nuking the SOBs. If they try anything else, the only place the Koran will be read will be in Hell!”

Collin had never seen GW this mad, even after 09/11! He decided to let him recall the troops, we’d need the manpower here anyway to clean up and maintain order.

Meanwhile, back at the Ranch...

The next day, everyone at the ranch was in shock at the casualty figures. The number of dead and injured exceeded 09/11 by at least 5 times. Jackie went out to unlock the gate since the attack was obviously over, yet she had a sinking feeling that this was just round 1. The ranch hands showed up later that day, and Manny put them to work checking out the cattle. Manny decided that today would be a good day for Target practice. He was half tempted to put up some generic "Raghead Terrorist" stickers over the targets, but he was afraid that wouldn't be too funny after all. One thing he did notice was that everyone was out shooting today, and they all seemed very intent on hitting the targets. Later that afternoon, the Sheriff showed up to talk to Jackie.

"I want to do something for you for what you did yesterday. The mayor of Salt Lake City and the Governor of Utah wanted to pin a medal on you, but I talked them out of it by telling them that would make you a target for retaliation. Is there anything you need?"

"I'd love some aerial surveillance, and some real firepower. I know the Bushmasters you shipped us will take M -203 launchers since they have the bayonet lug, but I don't know if you have enough pull with the governor to get us 6 M-203s and a couple of cases of high-explosive 40mm grenades. If you have any other ideas, I'd appreciate them."

"Jackie, I doubt if I have that much pull - we don't even have that kind of hardware. As far as the aerial surveillance, one of the deputies is into flying model planes, and he mounted a mini-CCD camera under the belly, and can transmit pictures from it. The drawback is they can only stay aloft for an hour, and then they need to be refueled. Maybe you could locate a powered glider model that can stay aloft longer."

"Thanks Sheriff, especially about getting that medal killed - you're right, they would love to come after me - I probably foiled their plans at striking a primary target."

After the Sheriff left - he was busier than a one-armed paperhanger, Jackie checked their stores, asked Sally to have the diesel topped off, and ran into Manny. He said they had already ordered 2 trailers full of alfalfa and the barn would be there tomorrow to install. Jackie mentioned Horse Feed, and Manny smacked himself - "I'll get right on it! Might as well order as much as we can store, just in case, as well as a supply of vet meds for the horses and cattle." Jackie asked him about security for the herd. That stopped Manny in his tracks. He would call around and see if anyone had some spare cattle dogs handy, and maybe a Rottweiler puppy to raise for Ranch security. Jackie reminded him to put in a big store of dog food as well. Jackie walked back home, and got on the Internet. She located a supplier of heirloom seeds, and ordered a five-year supply for the farm. The order was so huge it had to come by common carrier truck. Just how much did 5 years worth of seeds for a 20-acre farm weigh anyway?

Manny had struck paydirt. A ranch right up the road had some spare cattle dogs they couldn't

afford to feed, and another one had purebred Rottweiler puppies from German stock so they didn't have hip dysplasia. He called Jackie and gave her directions. Jackie was muttering under her breath "go-fer this, go-fer that!" She jumped into her truck, and noticed just how badly the paint was scorched. When she got to the first ranch, they had 3 cattle dogs that were about a year old. They were sad to see them go, but couldn't afford to feed 3 more when they already had 6. Jackie dropped the tailgate, and they jumped right in like they had been doing it all their lives. When they got to the other ranch, Jackie got out only to be greeted by a dog that was large enough for a kid to ride it if they could saddle it. "Maxwell - get down!" The ranch wife apologized. It seems Maxwell thought everyone was coming over to play with him! She told Jackie that Maxwell was the father, and the mother and pups were in the barn. Then she saw the scorching on her paint job, and Jackie gave her the Reader's Digest version. She yelled for her husband "Harold Get out here - this is the lady that saved Salt Lake City." Harold nearly crushed her hand in his enthusiasm. He had heard through the grapevine and the news that someone had blown up the truck that was headed for Salt Lake City to blow up the Temple. "Mam - Henrietta told me you wanted a pup - Why don't you pick which one you want and take it free. We're grateful that you saved our temple. We've only been a few times to the Salt Lake Temple, but we would have been devastated if they had succeeded in destroying it. Thanks for everything. If there's anything else you guys need, make sure to call us. Also, if you don't already, I'd highly suggest you get a bunch of 2-meter radios. All the ranchers use the 2-meter radio for ranch to ranch communications. I'm afraid this is just the start of a very bad time for our country." Jackie walked into the barn, and was almost flattened by a male Rottweiler puppy that was the spitting image of his dad. He was busy licking her face when Henrietta pulled him off her. "Just how old are these puppies?"

"They're barely 3 months old. Their father weighs over 150 pounds, so they get big fast! I think this one has made your decision for you - what do you think?"

Jackie didn't know squat about big dogs, the biggest dog she had owned was a toy poodle. Obviously the puppy liked her, so she said OK. "Does he have a name?"

"No we decided to let the owners name them."

"Ok if I call him Max after his Dad?"

"I think he'd like that." Henrietta put a choke collar and a heavy leash on Max, and handed the leash to Jackie, then they walked back to the truck. Henrietta said goodbye to the pup, then gave Jackie a hug. Jackie opened the passenger door, and sat Max on the floor and closed the door, and hurried around to the driver's side. When she opened the door, Max jumped up on the seat to look out his window, just like dogs do everywhere when they are riding in cars. Jackie made sure the electronic door and window lock were locked so he couldn't unlock it or jump out. When they got to the ranch, the Cattle dogs must have seen or smelled the cattle, and when Jackie got out and lowered the tailgate, they ran like a shot for the cattle, yapping all the way. They ran the cattle around for a few minutes, then settled down in the shade right near the

cattle. She put the tailgate back up, and opened Max's door, and when she reached for his leash, he gave her another "doggie kiss". Now Jackie knew how Lucy felt in Peanuts when Snoopy kissed her! She gave Max a big hug, and he just stood there and grinned a big puppy grin. She carried him out of the truck, since he was too small to jump yet, and then as soon as he was on the ground, he lifted a leg to pee on a tire, as if to say "My truck!" Jackie laughed and hoped he didn't need to mark any territory inside the house, since he was too young and small to stay outside. They'd build him a doghouse in another 6 months to a year when he was big enough to tolerate staying outside for the night. Manny walked over to check out the new dog and said "Madre de Dios, that's not a Dog, that's a horse!"

"Manny, you should see his Dad! Your kids could ride him if they could get a saddle on him. Max here is going to weigh over 150 pounds when he 's full grown."

"I think I better order some more dog food! See ya later Jackie."

Before he left, Jackie asked Manny what he would eat.

"I don't know, he's too big for puppy food, and would probably grow too fast, I'd get a good dog food like Purina or some other brand. The truck will be here tomorrow from the feed store. Do you have any hamburger, white rice, and frozen corn?"

"Why?"

"That's what you can feed him until the regular dog chow shows up. The vets told us that's what you feed a sick dog, so it should work OK for a puppy. Make sure it's regular hamburger, they can use the fat, but not too much, or you'll be cleaning your carpets."

"Thanks for the advice Manny!"

Jackie took Max inside the house, and took off the leash, then took a plastic bowl out of the cupboard and filled it with water. Max drank like he hadn't had any water in a while, then Jackie noticed Max drooled, and not a little. "Yuck - Doggie Drool!" Jackie tried to get some work done, but Max was always under foot. Manny came back and knocked on the door, he had some toys for Max to keep him busy, and avoid chewing the furniture. He had an old tennis ball and a foot-long rope with knots in both ends. He said Rottweilers love to play tug-of-war, and as they get bigger, they usually win! If she wanted to tire Max out so he would get some sleep, he suggested a game of Fetch. He asked if Jackie had an old blanket they weren't using so Max would have a designated sleeping spot. Jackie rummaged around and found an old wool army blanket. Manny said that would do fine. Jackie picked an out of the way spot, and set the blanket down and folded it. She carried Max over to it, and he sniffed it and promptly laid down for a nap. Jackie thanked Manny, who showed himself out and closed the door quietly.

While Max was asleep, Jackie surfed the Internet looking for recommendations for 2-meter

radios. It seemed the 2 main brands were Kenwood and ICOM. The ICOM with the best feature/price ratio was the 2100-H for a little over \$100.00 each with the DTMF microphone, which the review sites highly recommended if they lived in an area with repeaters, since most of them used DTMF tones to access their auto-patch feature that patched your radio into the telephone system to call 911. For mobile applications, they recommended a 5/8 wave steel whip antenna with a NMO mount for roof mounting on a pickup, which was the best place to put one for maximum reception and transmitting range. Several sites sold them for around the same price, so she knew that price was an industry standard. Next she got out her Yellow Pages, and called a Radio store in Winnemucca. Sure they had the ICOM 2100H for \$150 each. Jackie asked to talk to the manager, who confirmed the price. Jackie explained she wanted 5 units, and needed 4 of them installed, and she could get the 2100-H on the internet with the DTMF microphone for around \$100 plus shipping. He offered to sell them for \$150 each including installation. She asked about the antenna. She had seen NMO antennas on the internet for \$20 each. He said that he could give her a 5/8 wave steel whip NMO mount antenna and the ICOM 2100-H with the DTMF microphone, everything installed for \$180 each, with a \$50 credit off the one that they didn't need installed. Jackie asked how much they would charge to come out to the ranch and install it with their existing power supply. He said with the travel time, and the longer cable, he'd have to charge at least \$100. She thanked him and said she'd get back to him. He mentioned that you had to have an FCC license to operate HAM radios. He gave her the details, and said there was a radio club right here in town that could administer the tests. He said something Jackie wasn't anticipating. Everyone who wanted to use the radio needed to have at least a Technician Class license. That would mean at least her and Sally, plus if the other board members wanted a radio. Since they hardly used their radios, Jackie said they would be interested in 2 radios for now, 1 installed and one they'd install themselves. He gave her the phone number of the radio club, and told her the quote was good for 30 days, and she had to have the license first before he could install a radio. It was company policy that they couldn't install a radio in a vehicle without a FCC license. When she got off the phone, she called the Radio club. The club President knew the Sheriff, and had heard about Jackie. He volunteered to loan her his manual, and they could set up a test date as soon as she was ready. Jackie said that their secretary Sally would be taking the test too. It turned out Sally was the wife of one of the radio club members, and he had been trying for years to get her to take her test. Jackie said she would fix it for them, then got directions to his house to pick up the book. She said she would be there tomorrow and got directions to his house.

Chapter 30

Jackie spent the rest of the day playing outside with Max, and when it got close to dinnertime, she went inside and made dinner for Darrell and Max. Max decided now would be a good time for a nap, so he sacked out on his blanket. An hour later, Darrell came in the door, and was greeted by Max. “Whoa - who’s the monster?”

“Max, meet Darrell, Darrell, meet Max!”

Darrell reached over to pet Max, since he smelled Jackie’s scent on him, he knew Darrell was OK. They played for a while, and Jackie commented, “I thought you didn’t like dogs?”

“No - I said I didn’t like small yappy dogs like you were used to, I had a Golden Retriever by the name of Sam, we were best buddies when I was growing up. He died right before I went to college, so you never met him, I love big dogs, and Max looks like he is going to be a moose!” Darrell and Max played on the carpet until Jackie announced dinner was served. Jackie and Darrell ate Mexican, and Max got his hamburger rice and corn. Max ate like a piggy, Jackie and Darrell used a knife and a fork. When they were through with dinner, Darrell played with Max again. Jackie was glad Darrell had something else to play with; she was getting too old for this.

The next morning after breakfast, Jackie took Max for a ride with her to the President of the radio club’s house. She met his wife, and he met Max. Naturally Max assumed everyone was there to play with him. John showed Jackie his radio shack, and she asked him some questions. She was mostly interested in local communications. John agreed 2 meter was the way to go, and told her that their repeaters were all linked together, so if she could hit one, she could hit them all. From their ranch, she should try the repeater at 147.960 MHz, and it had a PL of 200 and a 60 KHz negative split. That meant she received on 147.960, and transmitted on 147.900 MHz, since it was a negative split repeater to avoid conflicts with Elko county amateur radio repeaters that were mostly positive split. When she got the radio installed, he’d program it for her. Jackie asked John if he knew of anyone who could install their radio and antenna. The Vice President, Gene (Sally’s husband) would install both radios for \$50.00 if Jackie could get Sally to pass the Technician Class test. All she had to do was buy 2 radios and 1 NMO mount 5/8 wave antenna with a 15 foot cable, and he’d take it from there. He had an antenna mast he wasn’t using, with a full-wave antenna that could hit anything in Humboldt County, and parts of Eureka and Elko counties with a 50 watt transceiver. He had 100 feet of RG-213 cable, and he’d bill her cost for the cable and the PL-259 ends. This was a much better deal than the Radio dealer was offering. Jackie said she would order the radios and parts, and get Sally studying so she could pass. Jackie wanted to schedule the test in 2 weeks to be on the safe side. John checked his calendar, and the date was open. He called the other members of the test board on his radio, and they all had the time free, so he went ahead and scheduled the test right then and there. Jackie thanked him, grabbed Max’s leash, and John handed her the book in a plastic bag

so Max wouldn't drool all over it.

As soon as she got home, Jackie ordered 2 ICOM 2100-H radios with the DMTF microphones. Jackie had asked John, and yes they did have an auto patch with 911 and the NHP dispatch programmed in speed dials, so the DMTF microphone was a good option. It was overkill for the base station, since the phone was right there, but it was only 10 dollars more than a standard microphone, and John had told her that they could do all the operations of the radio through the microphone. She remembered to order the antenna and cable as well, and paid for it with the corporate credit card, since it was going in a vehicle and as a base station for the office.

Jackie walked over to Sally's office and asked her "How would you like to get your FCC Technician class license? Great, because I talked to John, and we're taking the test in 2 weeks, and I've already ordered the radios. One's going in my truck, and the other is going to be a base station attached to the power supply that's running your aviation radio, since you can't transmit on both of them at the same time. OK, come over to my place after work - and we'll study the book together." After Sally agreed, Jackie walked over to Darrell's office, and said he was on his own for dinner; she and Sally had to study to pass the FCC license exam so they could get a Ham radio license. Jackie explained that the whole county was interconnected with a 2-meter radio link, and anyone with the right equipment could use it, all they needed was an FCC license. Jackie said the best thing was the license was free, and the radios only cost about 100 dollars. She wanted to install 1 in her truck, and the other as a base station at Sally's desk, so they both needed FCC licenses. She said Sally's husband would install the radios for them if she got Sally to pass the exam, since he had been trying to get her to take it for years. Darrell thought it was an excellent idea. He assured Jackie that the guys would be OK by themselves.

After work, Sally and Jackie retired to her room to study. Several hours later, they came out and asked Darrell a couple of questions. Darrell proved to be a font of knowledge, and answered most of their questions. Jackie was kicking herself that they didn't just ask Darrell first. She just assumed that since he was a computer geek that he wouldn't know much about electronics. She didn't realize that AC/DC circuit analysis was a prerequisite to the programming courses in his college. They wanted programmers that could design the circuits as well as program them. Sally got home a couple hours late that night, Sally's husband Gene was glad she was studying for her Tech license, and made his favorite food, franks and beans. Sally asked Gene if he'd mind making dinner for the rest of the week, since they were going to study for about 2 hours every night. Gene was curious about what they were doing, and told Gene that Jackie had already bought 2 ICOM-2100H radios, and needed Gene to install them, 1 in Jackie's truck, and 1 in the base station. Gene asked Sally if she would want another mobile unit in her truck. Sally thought that was an idea, since she drove almost an hour from home to the ranch mostly on ranch roads that didn't see much traffic. Gene told her he had an old ICOM 2100 laying around that he wasn't using since he got the V-8000, and could install it in her truck with a quarter wave whip roof mount antenna while he was doing the other installations. Sally gave Gene a big hug and a kiss. She knew he had her safety in mind. Jackie was starting to rub off on her, and she made emergency kits for both vehicles and stuck them in there. Sally

showed Gene her P-14, and he was envious, it cost almost twice as much as he paid for his Kimber .45, but the upgrades he did brought it just about equal in cost.

The next day, Jackie took Max out to go the bathroom, and couldn't believe a dog could produce a pile so huge, her little poodle's poops were maybe the size of her pinky, and Max's were 10 times that size. Obviously he was going to eat a lot of food, and that meant that she'd need to invest in a pooper scooper and some sort of disposal method. She'd also have to find a designated area for him to go downwind of the house. She played with Max the rest of the morning, meaning she took a slobbery tennis ball out of his mouth and threw it as far as she could, dodging the drool that flew off it. After a couple of dozen tosses, she didn't know who was more tired, her or Max! Max finally decided that it was time for a nap, so they went inside and went to sleep. Jackie took the chance to surf the net, and saw that the radios had already shipped, and she had a UPS tracking number. She'd check back in a few days to see when they were going to be delivered. Later that evening, Sally showed up for Round 2. This time Jackie asked Darrell if he could help. At the end of the 2 hours, they knew the subject cold, and knew it! Darrell was an excellent teacher, and Jackie made sure he knew later that evening.

The next day, the Sheriff showed up in his personal Suburban. He asked Manny to help him unload some crates with "UT State National Guard" stamped on them. He told Manny they were a present from the Governor of Utah, and he didn't want to know what was in the boxes, he was just the delivery man. As soon as he left, Manny called Jackie, who walked over with Max on a leash, and they opened the crates. Inside was a note from the Governor:

Dear Mrs. Hayes:

These are a small token of thanks from the People of Utah. Only use them in an emergency, since they are probably illegal for a civilian to own.

Thanks,

Governor Olene S. Walker

Manny and Jackie pried the covers off the other crates. Inside was a case containing 6 M -79 grenade launchers, commonly called Thumper, and 3 cases of 40mm practice rounds, and 6 cases of 40mm High Explosive grenades. There were 12 grenades per case, giving them 36 practice rounds, and 72 High Explosive rounds. Manny knew immediately what they were looking at and said "Madre de Dios - you planning on fighting WWII?"

"Maybe, depends on if those Raghead terrorists decide to try to get revenge for me killing their driver and foiling their plans."

Unfortunately, at that very moment, a ranch wife posted an innocent looking e-mail to a cutout with a code phrase indicating she had urgent information for the nearest cell. She wasn't Jewish

like her husband thought, but a Shiite Muslim from a small village in Iran who was sent to the US after she was raped by an uncle, making her unable to marry in Iran. Her Uncle was killed the night she left for America by her brothers. His means of dying was exceptionally painful, and his screams echoed throughout the village all night, yet no one intervened, since they were following the dictates of the village Imam, who on top of being a religious leader, was the de-facto leader of the village. They could have stoned her to death, but after seeing the bruising and cuts on her uncle, the Imam decided she had fought sufficiently well to defend her virtue, and was overpowered by her older and stronger uncle. She was seriously twisted by the event, and the revolutionary cell in Nevada used her as a mole to pass information to the cell. As part of her cover, she married a prominent rancher and even pretended to be Jewish, and later a convert to the LDS church when she married her husband. They had 3 children, and she passed information on to the cell on a regular basis through 3 levels of cutouts. This time her information was the location of the infidel woman who had killed the leader of their cell, and thwarted their plans to destroy the symbol of the hated religion. It took its time to pass thorough all the cutouts and reach the head of the terrorists in California. He decided to add destroying the ranch and killing the infidel woman to the list of attacks for Phase II.

Sally and Jackie studied again that night, and were ready early for their FCC test. Darrell administered the practice test, and both passed with 95% scores. They each missed a question on FCC frequency allocation regulations, but even most HAMS had to look at the rule book for that. Later that week, the radios arrived, and Jackie left to teach a shooting class. This time Sergeant Kennedy was wearing his prescription shooting glasses, and easily shot a qualifying score. Since they had 2 hours to kill, she taught him the Failure to Stop Drill, and he was performing it very well when the time ran out. Jackie drove back to the ranch, locked the gate, and set the booby trap. Anyone that worked at the ranch knew not to mess with the gate, so the last person in at night locked it and set the booby trap, which was a powerful anti-vehicle/anti-personnel mine set inside the cattle grate made with several pounds of C-4 and 50 pounds of shrapnel including nuts, bolts, and ball bearings set on a plate on top of the C-4. The C-4 charge by itself was sufficiently large to lift and destroy a tank, and the shrapnel shredded any personnel inside its huge kill radius.

Manny decided to include practicing with the grenade launchers as part of their target shooting training. Darrell and Steve agreed to try it, but the other board members wanted nothing to do with high explosives or grenades. That left Darrell, Steve, Manny, Susan, Sally and Jackie as the designated grenadiers. Manny uncovered some bandoleers for the grenades in the bottom of one of the crates, so each of them had a bandoleer with 6 grenades on it, as well as their bullet-resistant Blackhawk raid vest, and a pistol belt butt pack with their P-14 on a SAS thigh holster and 4 mags on the opposite thigh, and a canteen/cup/stove plus a Kabar knife on the pistol belt. The Butt pack carried their E&E kit including a Battle Pack with 600 rounds of either .223 or .308 ammo, and the raid pack contained another E&E kit, ammo, a fairly extensive First Aid Kit, and on the back was a Camelback 4 liter water bladder system. The entire rig weighed a little over 40 pounds when fully loaded. Jackie had daybags with 2 changes of clothes, shelter and food for an extended E&E kit they could carry over their raid vests that added another 10

pounds, but gave them an extended E&E kit just in case the ranch got overran. Manny had dug fighting positions all over the ranch, and lined them with sandbags. They ringed the perimeter of the buildings, but were far enough away from the mortar cannons and other nefarious devices Manny's "cousins" had built for them. Anyone who made it through all of Manny's dirty tricks would be met by 40mm high explosive grenades and concentrated AR-15 fire.

By now it was about 2 weeks before Christmas, and Jackie knew that the Moslems would probably attack Christmas Eve or Christmas day. More likely on Christmas day. She just didn't know what form the attack would take. Finally the day for their test arrived, and they drove into town. 2 hours later, they were told they had both passed. Gene installed the radios the next day, and as soon as they had their call signs posted on the internet, the radio club encouraged them to go on the air and meet everyone electronically. Jackie didn't like all the chit-chat that was going on, but Sally knew everyone, and talked for hours. Gene felt like Dr. Frankenstein! Finally Sally got it out of her system, and limited her airtime to an hour per day. Manny installed a duplicate panic switch underneath Sally's desk right next to her Witness Protection shotgun. Jackie finally broke down and built an armory in the office building, using an unused office and several high-security cabinets. All the rifles, ammunition, and vests were stored there. The Grenades and launchers were stored in a heavily insulated case bolted to the floor, with an explosion proof door. In the event of an attack, Manny or Sally could press the panic button, and they would all assemble in the armory, load up and disperse to their 2-man fighting holes. Including Manny's older sons, and the ranch hands, they had enough people now to field 6 2-man teams. It wasn't much, but it was better than nothing. Manny had decided each team needed an FRS/GMRS radio for communications. For obvious reasons, the married couples made up 3 of the teams, and Sally teamed up with one of the board members who was the better shot of the 4, and Manny's son teamed up with the other one. The two worst shots formed a final team, since they were good friends. Even the 2 worst shots could shoot 10-ring shots at 100 yards with the C-more sights. Jackie and Darrell were the heaviest armed with 2 AR-10T's and 2 grenade launchers. Jackie would have loved a GE Minigun, but even the Governor of Utah probably couldn't get her one! She'd even settle for an M-60a3. Jackie was a firm believer in Firepower! Jackie asked Manny to pack the remaining grenades that weren't in bandoleers in ammo cans, so each fire team could carry a box of 12 to their fighting hole if they had a chance. Manny agreed because the grenades would be safer inside an ammo can cradled in egg crate foam than in the original military cases, which were wood. Manny realized they only had 3 cases or 36 grenades that weren't in bandoleers, so he put 6 grenades each into smaller ammo cans to reduce weight and storage space, giving each fire team 6 extra grenades. Sally had Jackie make a custom holster for her WP shotgun since her partner in the fighting hole didn't have a thumper. Jackie remembered her Mossberg 590, and offered it to Manny's son to give them more up-close firepower. They moved it to the arsenal, and added it to the load-out along with a 25-round bandoleer full of 00 Buckshot and slugs. They were as prepared as they could be, so they stood down for Christmas Eve. Jackie asked Gene to join them for Christmas Eve and stay over for Christmas day, since he had a scoped FAL and 20 20-round magazines for it. He could pair up with his wife. Jackie was amazed when he told her he had a vest as well. Jackie thought to herself "Warped minds thought alike!" Christmas was festive but reserved,

since they knew another attack was possible any day now.

Jackie made sure everyone was up, alert and eaten at 0600 Christmas morning. They were in the conference room singing Christmas Carols when the gate blew up. Since everyone was already there, Sally didn't hit the panic button to alert the invaders that they knew they were coming. 2 minutes later, everyone was suited up and headed toward their fighting holes lugging extra ammo and a box of 40mm grenades. Manny had an excellent idea, and Jackie agreed, He carried 6 extra grenades marked Practice which had a tiny marker charge in them. Manny was going to use them to sucker in the terrorists in case they went to ground after the first explosion by making them think the "Dumb Americans" were trying to defend themselves with practice grenades. Manny would fire several practice grenades, and when they got up to rush the compound, they would fire a quick volley of 6 High Explosive grenades, hopefully catching the Raghead Terrorists out in the open, and solving the mystery of whether Paradise was 79 Virgins or 79 Angry Virginians.

Sure enough, the mine had destroyed the first pickup, and all 6 terrorists in it, and the 2nd pickup was damaged but driveable, and most of the terrorists were wounded. Still, they were mad that the Americans would resort to the same dirty tricks they pulled on American Soldiers in Iraq. They had gone to ground, and were waiting an order to move forward. Seeing the Mexican Standoff was about to ensue, Manny decided to try his trick, and started firing practice rounds at the truck. The first one scared several of them into soiling their pants, then the leader realized after the 4th round that they were only practice rounds. He yelled to the rest of his team "The Stupid Infidels are trying to defend themselves with practice rounds - let's charge and kill them all! Don't kill the blond woman, I want to kill her personally. Allah Akabar!"

With that they charged, and when they had cleared cover, Manny gave them a 1-2 punch of detonating the electronically controlled pipe bombs along the road, and blowing his whistle, indicating a grenade barrage. All 6 thumpers "blooped" at once, and 6 40 mm grenades decimated any survivors of the pipe bombs. 15 minutes later, Manny blew 3 blasts on his whistle indicating "All Clear" and Sally ran back to the Office to call the Sheriff. Everyone else stayed in their fighting holes until 4 sheriff's vehicles came storming up, including the Sheriff himself. Manny made sure all the explosives had their safeties back on. The deputies checked for survivors, and some lost their lunch. What was left of the Terrorists was going to be difficult to ID. There was a woman among them, and her face was still intact enough to ID her, and the Sheriff immediately dispatched a deputy to her ranch.

An hour later the deputy reported that everyone's throat was slit, including her husband, 3 young children and the family dog. She left a rambling note in Arabic that he would have to have translated to find out what happened. The deputy bagged the note without touching it, and sealed the house with police tape, then drove back over to the ranch. The fire teams and the deputies assembled in the office after the fire teams had put up all their hardware. The Sheriff debriefed everyone, and determined that the Terrorist's surprise attack was foiled by a huge anti-vehicle mine under the cattle guard. He avoided asking them how they acquired the

explosives, he didn't look a gift horse in the mouth. He had 20 dead terrorists and 12 civilians without a scratch on them.

Suddenly the lights flickered, went out for a second until the auto-switching transfer switches could kick in and restore the lights. 5 minutes later the Sheriff's handy talkie started squawking. The main power lines were down, and they were on emergency generator power at the Sheriff station. Putting 2 and 2 together, the Sheriff determined this must be Phase 2. Thinking quickly, he asked Darrell if they had an operating Internet connection, and Darrell said that they had a microwave relay that connected at DSL speeds into the internet, and led the Sheriff to a computer. Quickly they turned it on, and the Sheriff logged into the LEO only section of the Homeland Security website, and sent out an urgent warning to BOLO a second wave of terrorist attacks concentrating on the infrastructure especially the power grid. The FBI and ATF picked up on it immediately since the Sheriff was famous for his last timely warning, and they put out a RED ALERT to all stations that stopped some terrorists, but others succeeded. Over ½ the grid was damaged, and would need 60 days to fix.

Chapter 31

Unlike the bunch of cannon fodder that attacked the Ranch in a frontal assault, the other terrorist teams were stationed near their targets for weeks, making sure there was no one guarding their target, and when they got the go code over the radio, drove down to their assigned tower, and attached 3 sticks of dynamite to a tower leg, and lit the fuse, then skipped a tower, and repeated the process. They managed to keep ahead of any law enforcement that way, and return to their safe houses. Several teams managed to get close enough to generating facilities to take out the transformers with an RPG and bug out quickly before a response team could catch them. The utilities had made a serious mistake locating their power plants near major freeways, since the terrorists were able to get on the freeways on Christmas day when the traffic was light, and so was law enforcement, and speed out of the county before the police could get word that they had been attacked. If it weren't for the Sheriff's warning, the entire grid would have collapsed. The power facilities that were still operating quickly severed their ties to the grid, and the interstate flow of power stopped, leaving California in the dark since they were almost 100 percent dependent on out of state power. As a result, looting and rioting was not far behind. With the military on a holiday schedule, and everyone on leave, it took several days to get any response from National Guard Units to stop the rioting. Luckily, in California the rioting was mainly limited to Watts, Oakland, and sections of Los Angeles. Thanks to the various anti-gun laws passed recently, Korean shopkeepers were unable to defend their stores, and either died trying or left. This would have repercussions later when business owners refused to re-open in the burned out areas, resulting in almost 100% unemployment and more rioting, causing National Guard troops to be stationed in the areas until they almost became an army of occupation to the residents

Radical Black Muslims like Louis Farrakhan tried to take advantage of the situation and start a race war. Actually they were acting under orders of their sponsors in the Middle East who had been secretly funding them for decades. What did them in was when the Black Baptist ministers realized they had more in Common with their White Baptist neighbors than some Black radical Muslim from New York. Several of them were mad enough to speak against the Black Muslims the next day from their pulpits. Between the dampening effect of the Black Baptist ministers refusing to go along, and several phone calls placed to the FBI from several ministers who felt that Farrakhan had gone too far, the attempt at a Race War was stillborn. FBI agents swooped in with John Doe warrants thanks to the Patriot Act and arrested the ringleaders and held them as Enemy Combatants. Several sang like canaries in order to avoid threats of Death Penalty for Terrorism and treason, and laid out the whole rotten system, including millions of dollars each year funneled into Radical Islamic organizations from front organizations in the Middle East. Fast FBI work followed the money back, and proved beyond a doubt that America had been the victim of a massive destabilization campaign from several Middle Eastern countries. The NSA worked overtime when the dogs were finally unleashed, and located a bunch of houses with unusual telephone activity. Phone calls from the Middle East on certain days were immediately suspect and FBI/CIA surveillance teams saw Middle

Eastern men moving into and out of the homes. This set the stage for the first Civilian use of the military in law enforcement, since President Bush rightly claimed Posse Comitatus didn't apply to acts of War and Terrorism. The neighbors were quietly evacuated, then the Army Delta Forces, aided by conventional military since there weren't enough teams, conducted a lightning counterstrike on all the identified safe houses. Delta managed to take more prisoners than the conventional Military units, which basically flattened the houses by ramming a Bradley Fighting vehicle through the front door - Oopsie!

The prisoners were forced to talk by any means necessary, the US wasn't in a mood to mess around with people attacking the country. The "interrogations" revealed the other safe houses, and indicated stores of deadly nerve agents and toxins that suspiciously resembled exactly the stuff Saddam Hussein swore he didn't have - he gave it to the terrorists!

That information was quickly passed up the chain of command, and the storage facilities were neutralized by troops in NBC gear, and the safe houses were destroyed by rocket fire. These were the hard core leaders, and wouldn't surrender or talk anyway, so the commanders on the scene authorized the destruction of the safe houses from a safe distance using rockets.

The next day the reports reached George Bush's desk. His blood pressure started high and went higher. Finally he called President Putin, and presented his information. He didn't care that he was revealing sources and methods - he felt the time had come to destroy the Middle East to prevent any further attacks. Colin Powell came barging in protesting, and GW did the gutsiest thing he had ever done in his administration, he had CP fired and detained. With Colin Powell out of the way, the only thing that was stopping him from nuking the Middle East was the Russians. A few hours later, Vladimir Putin called George back on the hotline.

"George, I've discussed your proposal with my advisors, while we are shocked at the potential loss of life, we agree that your solution may be the only one, since they have tried through the centuries to eliminate Christianity and dominate the world. Even Russia herself battled the Muslims until they were finally stopped at modern day Turkey. Now our southern border is full of them. It seems your information was accurate about Saudi support for the Chechen rebels, and the head of the KGB, excuse me, State Security, told me that there has been increasing unrest in the Moslem nations to our South indicating that they are planning on a revolution. Evidently they were waiting to bring the USA down first, and then topple us. We'll have our work cut out for us, but with your "heads up" I'm sure State Security is capable of aborting this revolution before it begins. What are you planning on doing about Oil; we know the Middle East supplied about 30% of your oil consumption."

"Vladimir, could you please turn off the recorders, and ask your interpreters to leave the room. I'm doing the same."

"OK, they're off and we're alone. What's the big secret?"

“Ever since the first attacks, I had a contingency plan to destroy the Middle East except Israel with Neutron Devices. I had re-fitted 2 trident missile subs with Neutron warheads. Wouldn't do much good to leave the Middle East radioactive when the world needs their oil. Between the two subs, they estimate that they have enough megatonnage to eradicate the populations, and we can resume oil shipments in 30 days. If you want, we can either sell you an unlimited supply of oil at our pumping costs, not to exceed \$10.00 per barrel, or we can divide the Middle East oil fields, we'll take the western half of the Persian Gulf, and you can have the eastern half. Whatever you feel is right is OK with us.”

“We won't have the manpower to fight off the Muslims on our Southern Border and defend the oil fields; your offer to sell us oil for \$10.00 a barrel is very generous, considering it's been averaging \$30-36 a barrel since 2000. Let's say first come, first served, or would you rather we take turns?”

“Let's see how we do with re-opening the fields and the offloading systems. We might need to ration oil until we can get production back up to keep it fair. Also, we're going to have to offer the same deal to the Chinese. France and Germany can go to H*ll - they can pay full price! Britain has been an ally, so we'll offer them the same deal. Anyone else we're missing?”

“How about the Japanese and other Asian countries?”

“Haven't thought that far ahead - what would you do?”

“If it were me George, I'd charge them the same price as France and Germany until our economies catch up to theirs. They've been running a huge trade surplus with both of us, and we could stand to gain some market share by lower energy costs.”

“Brilliant Vladimir! Next, when do we launch?”

“Give me 12 hours to evacuate my embassies, and you can attack at dawn during their morning prayers - that way the good ones will go to Paradise!”

“One last thing Vladimir, I wanted to spare Israel, except we need to take them out of the nuclear club - what would you suggest?”

“How about one of your bunker busters you developed to take out Saddam Hussein's bunkers, if a B-2 delivered it, they'd never know what hit them, and the bunker would be wrecked, but there'd be minimal fall-out since the bunker is so deep.”

“OK, Vladimir, get your people out - H Hour is 0600 local tomorrow!”

“Thank you President Bush!”

Chapter 32

In whatever Russian Embassies in the Middle East were still open, controlled panic ensued upon receipt of a top secret message from President Putin to the Ambassador. It was a War Warning Code that had never been used. They had less than 12 hours to evacuate. Instead of destroying documents, their orders were to activate the self-destruct mechanism in the building which was designed to destroy the building and all its contents so they didn't have to take the time to destroy documents. The only hint the locals received that all was not well was a huge caravan of diplomatic vehicles streaming out of the Russian Embassies. President Putin had left strict orders to tell no one outside of the Embassy about the evacuation orders. If word got out about the impending nuclear strike, the very people they sought could escape destruction and start the whole mess all over again, so Putin sacrificed some lesser citizens to ensure the destruction of the leadership of the Middle East. President Bush decided not to notify our embassies, since he despised the people there- even the ambassadors were a bunch of useless fat cats. All his friends were in European Embassies where they were safe.

A single B-2 took off for Israel, and dropped a single weapon just minutes before H-hour, giving the extremely expensive bomber the bare minimum amount of time to clear the area. Even as it was starting its bombing run, the 24 Trident II D-5 missiles from the Ohio Class SSBN 739 Nebraska were already in the air, and would impact targets in the northern half of the Middle East within minutes of the departure of the B-2. The B-2 had a single target, the nuclear weapons storage bunker in the Israeli desert. It dropped a single highly-modified JDAM bunker buster with laser guidance, which punched through the bunker to the storage facility almost 200 feet below ground, and after a 30 second delay, detonated, destroying the warheads and the bunker. Since the bunker was so deep, there was no fallout, and minimal radiation, but Israel was permanently out of the nuclear club, except for a few small tactical devices they kept on hot pad alert. George was worried about reports that the Israelis had developed an ICBM, and didn't want to take a chance that Israel would launch an ICBM on their own towards the US or Russia. Without the warheads, the ICBMs were expensive firecrackers.

Meanwhile the SSBN Nevada was patrolling the Persian Gulf, when their ELF received the Execute Strike order, and the H-hour of 0600 local. The Captain was aware that the execution of his mission would result in the annihilation of the southern half of the Middle East. While the loss of life was regrettable, he understood his orders, and the reasoning behind them. The ancient battle between Christianity and Islam was going to be ended here and now by the extinction of the majority of Moslems. The rest of the Moslems could be controlled by their host governments, since they had almost no political power in Europe, and could be deported if the governments so desired. As the clock in Weapons control ticked off the seconds to their programmed launch, the Captain and the firing control officer called WEPS, inserted and turned their launch enabling keys simultaneously, removing the last safeties in the system, and putting the weapons control computer in automatic launch mode. It was now impossible to stop the launching of 24 Trident II D-5 ICBMs short of the destruction of the Nevada. As the rockets

lifted off, and the stages burned out, they headed to separate targets in the Southern Middle East. The Nevada disappeared under the waves and returned to port for rearming and debriefing. Once the missiles started their re-entry phase, the warhead separated as designed into 8 individual 400KT Neutron devices, each targeted at another city in the Middle East. Whoever was responsible for the attack plan did their job perfectly, and 1 minute after 0600 local, 99% of the residents of the Middle East with the exception of Israel ceased to exist.

Chapter 33

Later that morning, Jackie checked the news services on the internet, and what she read made her run over and turn on the TV and yell for Darrell. CNN had their Breaking News graphic up and a talking head was babbling something about the US nuking the entire Middle East. As usual, they only got half the story, and kept repeating it. Finally around Noon, the President addressed the US with an impromptu news conference. He looked rough like he hadn't slept much.

“My Fellow Americans, this morning I had to do something the world might condemn us for, but I had incontrovertible proof that every one of the Muslim nations in the Middle East was part of a conspiracy to destabilize, terrorize, and eventually take over America and Russia on their way to global domination. Despite what those liberals in the Media might have told you, Islam is NOT a religion of peace. One of two ways for a Muslim to enter paradise is to be killed in Jihad, or Holy War. The other is to live a perfect life and never break one of the thousands of rules set up by the Koran. As you can see, the average Muslim realizes it is much easier to enter paradise by dying in Jihad, that is why they have so many volunteers for suicide bombers - because the bombers go instantly to paradise to be serviced by 79 Virgins. After seeing images of the abject poverty the average Muslim in the Middle East lives in, while their leaders live like Kings, you can see why they volunteer.

All throughout History, Islam and the other religions have been fighting. Most of the time it was the Muslims attacking on another Jihad, and the Jews and Christians were forced to defend themselves. Despite what you might have read in the history books, the Crusades were an attempt to wrest control of the Holy Land back from the Muslims who were occupying it. They also were trying to reduce the size of the Muslim hordes and save Christianity. It's ironic in a way, since we share the same father Abraham. It's like Cain and Abel all over again. Anyway, when I presented my evidence to President Putin, he agreed something had to be done, and allowed us to use Neutron bombs to destroy the population centers of the Middle East with the exception of Israel. We did, however destroy their nuclear warhead bunker in the desert since we thought that a Nuclear Israel would not be in our best interest, since they had developed an ICBM capability. We caused minimal casualties and no fallout resulted from the destruction of the bunker that Israel denied having for decades.

This latest attack was just the start of a Jihad designed to destroy the United States as a nation. We found evidence that Muslim Terrorists had imported huge quantities of nerve agents, Sarin Gas, biotoxins, and deadly viruses designed to destroy the population of the United States. Interrogation of survivors of a pre-dawn raid on dozens of Muslim safe houses revealed the locations of other safe houses, and the storage sites of these agents. Specially trained Military personnel located and destroyed the agents, and seized documents outlining their targets. When the Homeland Security agency analyzed the data, they came to the conclusion that if the attack had been successful, 80% of the US population would have been dead within a year, and the

other 20 percent barely surviving. Then they were going to overthrow the government in Russia by starting revolts in the Muslim populations of the old Soviet satellites to their south, then joined by Muslims in Southeastern Europe, they planned to wage war on Russia itself. They were going to do the same things to Russia as they were going to do to the US. It was clear to President Putin and I that the Muslim countries of the Middle East had no intention of co-existing with us, so I took the only logical way out, and eliminated them.

Millions of Muslims still live in Europe. We have no quarrel with them as long as they continue to act in a peaceful manner. But know this, if you dare attack the US again, the only place the Koran will be read will be in Hell!

God Bless America”

Jackie stared at the TV for several minutes without saying anything, letting the enormity of what she had heard sink in. There must have been hundreds of millions of people living in the Middle East, and now they were all dead, and our President just admitted on National TV that he ordered it. Jackie knew what the international reaction would be, and knew that the US would be a target for a long time. This war was not over by a long-shot. By destroying Mecca and the Middle East, President Bush had just declared war on every Moslem left on the planet. She hoped the troops would be home soon, because we would need them to secure our borders. Finally Border Security would be a reality, instead of something politicians paid lip service to. If we didn't secure our borders immediately and deport anyone who didn't belong here, the last couple of months would be a petting party compared to what would happen. She knew that the US Military didn't get all the bio and chemical weapons available to the terrorists, since Saddam Hussein by himself had authorized enough bioweapons and chemical weapons to kill every person in the United States 3 times over!

Darrell was sitting there stunned - what had just happened? The President of the United States just ordered the deaths of over 100 million people? He didn't understand, and didn't want to accept it. He knew that the Moslem Terrorists were ruthless killers, but was that a reason to nuke the entire Middle East? And why did he spare Israel? The more he thought about it the more his head hurt. Just then Max came charging into the room and knocked Darrell over. He forgot about his problems for a minute and just enjoyed playing with Max. It was exactly what he needed. His mind was running in circles, and he was getting no where fast! With the distraction of playing with Max, the logical part of his mind kicked in and sorted it all out. 1) He wasn't personally responsible for their deaths, 2) The effects on his life and business should be minimal if the President got off his duff and started taking National Security seriously. 3) He, Jackie and Max were alive and well, and had just survived an attack by those same terrorists, 4) According to GW, they had narrowly averted a catastrophe that would have killed 80% of the US population, or over 300 million people. So that was a fair exchange, you try to kill 300 million of ours; we kill 300 million of yours for real! As illogical as it seemed, Darrell was OK with that logic for now. All over the US, regular citizens and politicians were wrestling with the new information. Surprisingly, the major media didn't immediately jump on the “Bash Bush”

bandwagon, so it never got started. They learned long ago that bashing the President when he was involved in a for-real shooting war, which this might become, was bad for business.

Meanwhile George and the Joint Chiefs had been busy. He had signed so many executive orders that he had writer's cramps. One of the first things he ordered was for the Military to seal our borders using any means necessary. Secondly, he gave the FBI and INS a blank check to locate, detain and deport anyone who didn't have a legal reason to be here, and anyone from the Middle East that wasn't an Israeli citizen was ordered deported ASAP. All student visas were cancelled, and the holders deported for security reasons. Any visitors of Muslim extraction were investigated, and if thought to be a security risk, they were deported as well. The airlines were busy for the next months flying deportees out of the country. The Mexican and Canadian borders were finally closed tight. Tourists wishing to visit the US were carefully scrutinized, and some were turned away. This had the effect Bush had hoped it did. Quickly the Terrorists that remained in the US found themselves on the run with no where to hide. Unfortunately hundreds of thousands of innocent Muslim US resident aliens were inadvertently caught in the web because they were related to someone on the watch list, and deported without recourse. Suddenly millions of Black Muslims realized it was no longer Cool to be a Muslim, dropped their Muslim names and garments, and went back to their "slave names" instead of Abdul Mohammed Abraham, they told everyone they were Joe Smith. Overnight the Black Muslim movement disappeared. The Black Baptists were laughing it up; they knew their Black Muslim Brothers were really as Muslim as they were white! Even the Right wing separatists got the hint that now was not the time to make waves. Metzger and his WAR cronies ended up trying to find real jobs, and tried to go legit.

During the rest of the day, various governments weighed in. The UN was screaming for a War Crimes Tribunal. GW sent Kofi Anan a letter stating that if they wanted to move to Brussels, they could do whatever they wanted, without a dime of US support or Military aid. He got the hint, and there was no more talk of a war crimes tribunal. With Russia and Britain probably voting against any measure to condemn the US, it was moot anyway.

The French President had wet his panties when he heard about the Nuclear Attack and destruction of the Middle East. The puppet regimes they had tried to install to get favorable oil contracts would be gone forever, since the US was sure to move in to control the oil ports in the Persian Gulf. The Germans were mad because they now would have to write off billions of dollars of illegal sales to Iran and Iraq, since no one was alive to collect. Thank God the French and German governments got the underlying message of George's final statement, that if necessary he could and would nuke any host country that didn't keep their Moslem population from attacking America. If he was crazy enough to blow up the entire Middle East, adding France and Germany to the list wouldn't bother him at all!

President Bush remembered he needed to send a letter to the Chinese government. In it, he apologized for any loss of life of Chinese Citizens in the Middle East (he doubted there were more than a dozen) and offered the Chinese the same deal as the Russians regarding oil prices.

\$10.00 per barrel would go a long way to appeasing the Chinese, who were developing a huge thirst for crude oil.

Later that afternoon, he answered a call from the PM of Israel. He was not happy about having their nukes blown up. George pointed out that they weren't supposed to have them in the first place, according to several treaties they had signed. All he did was put them back in compliance with the treaties. George wasn't in the mood to listen to him, and told him to file a formal complaint with the State Department.

Finally, Tony Blair called from England. "George, I do wish you would have at least told us before you blew up the entire Middle East. We lost a couple of thousand subjects who were working in our embassies."

"Tony - I wish I could, but if all the embassies had evacuated, the very people we wanted to get rid of would have gone into their bunkers, and we would have to start all over again. Besides, if you noticed we didn't evacuate our Embassies."

"Yes George, we did notice, and are still confused."

"Well, for one thing, if we'd have bugged out, everyone would have known something was up, and frankly I couldn't stand most of the Foggy Bottom Stuffed Shirts that worked in those embassies. Most of the Ambassadors in that area are a bunch of Pompous Asses!"

"George, really - do you need to speak ill of the dead as well?"

"Sorry Tony, but you did ask why we didn't evacuate the embassies. One other thing. If I were you, I'd deport any Middle Eastern Moslems from England ASAP, since they probably had plans for your country as well. You should have seen the documents they showed me. Their hatred of Christians and Jews was almost psychotic in its intensity. They literally wanted all Christians and Jews dead. If I remember correctly, England is still officially a Christian Country since the Queen is also the head of the Anglican Church."

"Ok, point taken George, we'll look into deporting them as soon as possible."

President Bush knew he would have a tough time getting that through Parliament, since it was controlled by the Left Wing politicians. One could always hope. He said goodbye then called the Joint Chiefs for an update.

"Sir, so far we are building the Mexican Wall as fast as possible. It will be done in a month, and we installed a minefield between the fences, with danger signs in English and Spanish. Until the fence is completed, we're using aerial surveillance to locate illegals crossing. Our predator drones are earning their keep with their night vision systems. Several groups have been surprised by a squad of Camp Pendleton Marines, and have given up en masse. Evidently

word is getting out, and traffic through the border has slowed to a trickle - no one wants to mess with US Marines!”

“General did you put live mines in that minefield?”

“Yes Sir, wouldn’t do much good without it!”

George was just about to mention the bad press the US would get when the first Mexican challenged that minefield, then remembered that would be nothing compared to nuking the entire Middle East, and promptly dropped it.

“Thanks General, Keep up the good work!”

Next he called John Ashcroft for an update on the hunt for the terrorists, and the deportation of illegal aliens, especially from the Middle East or Muslims from any part of the world.

“Mr. President, I’m not too happy with your Executive Order deporting Resident Aliens. My legal department says they have some Civil rights.”

“John as I explained before, in a state of war, the powers of the President include doing everything I have to secure the safety of the nation. I’ve already issued a finding that these Muslim Aliens are a security risk and can be deported without hearing. If you’ve got a problem maybe you should tender your resignation!”

“George, I don’t want to resign, I just don’t feel real comfortable doing some of the stuff we’re doing. I’ve got no problem doing my duty, I just wanted you to know where I stood.”

“Noted!” George knew that John was speaking for the benefit of the recorders on the phone as a form of CYA in case there was a Congressional Investigation, or as some ultra-Liberal members of Congress had threatened, an Impeachment hearing. George was certain he could withstand an impeachment trial with the information locked in his Top Secret file, but didn’t want it to come to that! Why couldn’t the DNC have been sponsoring a CONDEL to Saudi Arabia that week? Of all the lousy luck! They had one practically every month to investigate something - yeah “Investigate” the shopping and brothels!

Chapter 34

The next morning George W Bush was in his residence when the private line rang. Since very few people had this number, he answered it. “Hello.”

“George, Its Reverend Billy Graham, I need to see you today as soon as possible.”

“I’d like that Billy, but I’m right in the middle of a Crisis!”

“I know, it’s about the Crisis, and it’s urgent!”

GW knew you could never say No Billy Graham, and he wasn’t one to waste time. “Ok, Billy, I’ll clear a slot this morning, come on over. I’ll tell the Secret Service to expect you.”

“George, can we meet some place private. I don’t want what I have to say to be recorded.”

“OK, I’ll meet you in the residence; I’m more comfortable talking to you there.”

“See you in a couple of hours Mr. President.”

When Billy hung up, George called the head of the Secret Service, and told him Billy Graham was coming over this morning. Then he called his secretary, and told her to clear his morning calendar.

Two hours later, Billy Graham was ushered into the Residence, and shown a very comfortable seat. Billy looked very frail, then George remembered he had hip surgery recently. After some small talk, Billy started in on what he had come to say.

“George, I have some very bad news for you, do you want to pray with me first?”

George got up and helped Rev. Graham to his feet. Billy put his hands on George’s shoulders.

“Father, we’re gathered here in this hour of crisis, please help us listen to your voice and obey your will. We ask this in Jesus Name, Amen!”

After George said Amen, they sat down again.

“George, I had a revelation last night in a dream. I believe the Lord spoke to me in the dream. I saw the Middle East vaporized, and then hundreds of oil tankers clogging the Persian Gulf, and later, I saw a renewed China attack Russia since they had all kinds of fuel and had been stockpiling it for years. 50 years later, they attacked a weakened and decadent USA. The scenes I saw in what had become happening in the USA sickened and disgusted me. The depth

of depravity we had sunk to made Sodom and Gomorrah look like a Puritan Convention. Marriage as we know it had ceased to exist. Men were living with Men, and Women with women. The “age of Consent” was a relic of the past, and all Child Molesters were treated as a Protected Minority instead of Criminals. Heterosexual relationships were shallow and there was no sense of commitment. Drug and alcohol use was rampant as well as all forms of pornography including Snuff films being shown in major theaters.”

I was shown a second image; it was you at the Throne of Judgment with blood on your hands. I didn’t understand that image, since you’re a Born Again Christian.

Next I clearly saw the text of a Bible Verse: 2Ch 7:14 "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”

“George, I’m afraid I have bad news for you. The Lord God has judged your actions, and found you wanting. You spilled innocent blood in a fit of anger. God will visit his anger on this nation, and his wrath will be horrible. They will pay for your sins. The Nation will be overcome by a strong foe, and the people will be handed over to them for judgment.”

“Rev. Graham, is there any way out of this? I don’t want the Nation to suffer for my mistakes. I realize I have innocent blood on my hands, and I’m sorrier than you’ll ever know, but I can’t bring back the dead. What can I do?”

“George, all I can say is the answer is in the Bible Verse. You need to seek humility, pray and seek God’s face, and repent from your evil. That’s the only way out of this!”

President George W. Bush did something he had never done before as President. He fell to his knees in front of the Reverend Graham crying in remorse. “God, I’m sorry - I’ve done a great wrong, please forgive me, and I’ll do whatever it takes to make things right.”

A tearful Rev. Billy Graham laid hands on George’s shoulders again and prayed silently with him for a while. When President Bush felt the Rev. Graham’s hands on him, his spirit was lifted, and he knew what he must do - Resign the Presidency. It broke his heart to even think about that, since it had been his lifelong ambition to be a famous president. Now all he would be famous for was mass genocide and quitting! He heard Billy Graham praying again, and his focus switched back to what he had done, and how sorry he was. Nothing could bring those people back, and the thought that he had killed millions of people vexed his spirit. All of a sudden, the reasons he did it seemed inconsequential. He was overcome with remorse and started crying and sobbing again as Billy continued to pray over him. When he stopped crying, he felt an immense sense of relief, and knew that God had forgiven him. The nation would still go through turmoil, but he hoped and prayed God’s judgment had been averted. When he finally stood up, he embraced the elderly minister, and they wept some more. When he’d regained his composure, he said “Billy, I have to resign the Presidency. I know it won’t bring

those people back, but it's a start for showing remorse over what I did. I wanted to let you know how grateful I am that you came here and delivered that message, then prayed with me. If you hadn't been obedient to God and delivered the message, our nation would have been destroyed, and my sin would have caused it. Thank you doesn't even cover it."

"George you learned an important lesson today - Pride destroys. Don't ever let your pride do that again to you! Hopefully you'll be able to minister to God's children in private life. I'll keep praying for you, and I'll ask my son to be there for you when I die. I'm not going to live much longer, and I know I've fought the good fight and ran the race, and my race is almost finished. God Bless, and Keep you!" Billy rose to leave, and George walked with him all the way to the front door of the White House.

"You know I'll miss this, but I'll never forget the sense of guilt I feel, so in a way, I'll be glad to leave."

"God Bless you George, I know you'll do the right thing!"

They shook hands, and Billy turned to leave.

George walked back into the White house one last time. He called Dick Cheney and told him he was the President as soon as he could get sworn in, he resigned.

George wrote his own resignation speech, and had his press secretary call the media and told them he needed to go on national TV as soon as possible.

Two hours later, George was facing the cameras. "Effective immediately, I resign the Presidency of the United States. I accept full responsibility for the attack that killed millions of innocent Moslems. I allowed my anger to get the better of me, and I made a rash and foolish decision. Dick Cheney will serve the remainder of my term, then John Kerry will be the next President when he is sworn in on January 20th. I regret what has happened, and if I could undo it, I would. I ask everyone to forgive me, and pray for me and this nation.

With that, George walked away from the podium and into private life. He didn't know what the future held, but he would try to listen to God more, and his pride less.

Next door, Dick Cheney was getting sworn in as President. He wasn't going to make the same mistake Gerald Ford did and pardon George Bush, since he was pretty sure he didn't do anything illegal. Immoral and Reprehensible, but not illegal. Dick Cheney's first act as President was to extend the olive branch to the surviving Moslems in Europe, Southern Russia, and Indonesia, and offer to establish them in the countries that Ex-President Bush had destroyed, and help them rebuild.

Chapter 35

Thanks to CNN's broadcast the next morning, Jackie learned that Cheney intended to do the bare minimum in the 2 months remaining until Senator Kerry would become President Kerry, and Senator Edwards would become VP Edwards. About the only good news was that Kerry had decided to nominate Edwards instead of Hillary Clinton, as the Extreme Left of the party wanted. The moderates won out, because they didn't know George would step on his crank with golf spikes right before the election, and hand not only the Presidency, but also the House and Senate to the Democrats. Luckily Governor Guinn had survived an attack from the left, and was still Governor of Nevada, or they would have really been in deep kimchee. The fact that Utah had gone ultraconservative again helped too. Even California was afraid to go too far left, and had re-elected Governor Swartzenegger to a second term as Governor of California. He had done such a remarkable job getting California back on its financial feet that he was a shoe-in for a Senate seat as long as he didn't mess it up.

The most troubling aspects of a Kerry Whitehouse and a Democrat controlled House and Senate was Jackie was sure Kerry would repeal all the anti-terrorism laws that George Bush had enacted, and the US would be wide open to terrorist attacks. Darrell had received an E-mail from the Secretary of the Navy putting their project in the "Militarily essential" category. This allowed them to take any means necessary to improve their security, and they did just that. After the Terrorist attack on their compound, Manny got a blank check to order any security devices he wanted, and the Compound was now as secure as they could make it. Manny had taken the aerial surveillance suggestion to heart, and located a military prototype electrically powered glider drone that could stay aloft from sunup to sundown using electric motors and photovoltaic cells on the upper surfaces. With its huge wing, there was plenty of area for solar cells. Because it was a daylight glider, it was fitted with a telescopic pan/zoom/tilt color camera that transmitted its images digitally to the base over 10 miles away. They got it for free on a T&E project for the Navy - Nice to have low friends in High places! Doing some further research, Manny located another electric plane that could be adapted as a night surveillance plane. It was an electrically powered glider, but operated as a powered glider instead of as a glider with power assist. It lacked the PV cells, but carried enough battery capacity to stay up for 6 hours at a time. Manny hired enough people to form a security department. Between running the ranch, and being in charge of Security, Manny was so busy he wished they could clone him. They even built a new underground security bunker with a storage building on top to disguise it. They moved the armory into the underground Security bunker since it was safer down there. Manny had all the remaining booby traps re-wired to connect to a master panel in the security bunker which was manned 24/7.

Jackie and Manny still insisted on weekly weapons practice, and had ordered enough ammo and spare magazines so they had to ship it via common carrier. The Sheriff had placed a huge order from the same supplier, so instead of shipping the orders separately, the Sheriff agreed to split the shipping costs with Jackie. She had the trucking company deliver the Sheriff's order first,

then theirs, since they didn't have a loading dock. When the order finally arrived, it took everyone they could spare to unload 20 cases of .223, 20 cases of .308 ammo, 2 cases of Corbon 230gr Flying Ashcan JHP ammo, and 10 cases of Winchester White Box 230gr FMJ practice ammo, and 3 boxes full of spare magazines. Jackie wasn't sure if they could get any more ammo or magazines once Kerry took office, so she made sure they would have enough. She wasn't too worried, since the Sheriff knew the Director of the local ATF office. Unlike his JBT counterparts in California and the East Coast, he knew that if they went door to door confiscating weapons that he had better bring a bunch of body bags.

Jackie was gaining a reputation as a shooting instructor, and soon had other agencies in the area ask her about training. She talked to Darrell and Jim, and set up a small company as a subsidiary of Winnemucca Systems called Tactical Training Systems. Word spread about how good of a trainer Jackie was, and soon local Federal agencies were added to her list. Finally, the inevitable happened, she had an interview with the Resident Agent in Charge of the ATF in Reno, NV. She dressed to impress in her business suit since she never wore dresses. She was as feminine as the next woman was, but knew dresses were a tactical nightmare. She left her weapons in the console of the truck when she parked in their secure underground parking lot, and after she cleared the metal detectors in security, she was escorted to the 14th floor office of the Federal Building in Reno. When she got to the ATF office, she was shown to a reception room, where a secretary got her a cup of coffee and told her Agent Nelson would be with her in a minute. 5 minutes later, Agent James Nelson walked out of his office, and introduced himself to Jackie. They walked into his office and closed the door before they spoke another word.

"Mrs. Hayes, I've heard good things about you from various sources. The Sheriff of Humboldt County is very impressed by your training techniques. He said you turned 5 of his worst-shooting officers into 5 of his best shooters at the next qualification session. Very impressive. I've already read your credentials, and I agree. We usually send our field agents to San Francisco for annual training, but I'd rather do the training locally. I've checked, and there is an excellent indoor range here in town, and I'd like you to be the Chief Instructor for our program. It would involve 1 overnight trip per month with all expenses paid by the ATF. You would teach 1 8-hour class each month to our agents as part of their ongoing training program. If you've got the time, I'd like you to meet someone in the office from the Justice Department. It seems the FBI is also interested in the program, and wants to share an instructor. If you're interested, you can do one training one day, and the second program the next day at the same range. The agencies would be paying you under separate contracts, but it would tend to minimize trips for you, and we'd obtain the services of a top-notch pistol instructor. I know you have no experience with Subguns, but we send anyone who needs refresher training on subguns and rifles to another school. What we need is someone who can teach defensive pistol shooting to all levels of shooters. We are especially interested in your Failure to Stop drill."

"Agent Nelson I'm flattered, but the drill is a standard Failure to Stop drill - a double tap to the chest followed by a single shot to the forehead if the suspect is still standing. I haven't trained Federal Officers before, and frankly it's a little intimidating!"

“Mrs. Hayes, don’t worry - We might be “The Feds” as some people say out here, but we’re just a different branch of Law Enforcement and we enforce a different set of laws. I can guarantee that none of my agents are the Jack Booted Thugs you read about. I run a tight ship, and any agent that shows any tendency to become a JBT is either transferred or fired outright. I know for a fact that if we started acting like Jack Booted Thugs out here in Nevada, we’d wind up getting a bunch of agents killed, since the average Nevadan is always armed, and most know how to shoot pretty good. I heard about that incident with the terrorists, don’t worry, we aren’t even remotely planning to investigate it, I’m just glad you’re OK. If you have any explosives left, I don’t want to or need to know about it. By the way, My parents wanted me to make sure I thanked you for saving the Mormon Tabernacle and Temple Square. They’re very devout, and would have been crushed if had been damaged or destroyed. Anyway, I’ve seen all I need, and I want to hire you as an instructor. Any questions?”

Jackie asked a bunch of questions, mostly financial questions that Jim had wanted asked. Finally Agent Nelson said, “I can’t answer those questions, but it sounds like your corporate attorney has been talking to you. How about I e-mail a contract to you for review, and if you’re OK with the terms, then sign and mail me a copy, otherwise, I’m sure Legal can resolve any issues you may have.” Agent Nelson stood up, indicating the interview was over, and shook Jackie’s hand. They walked out of his door, and she followed him to the office of the Agent in Charge of the Local FBI office. Agent Nelson introduced them then left. “Agent Williams, Jackie Hayes. Thanks, and see you later.”

“Mrs. Hayes, please follow me.” Agent Williams led Jackie to his plush office, which she noticed was much nicer than the ATF office she just left. He opened the door for her, and waited until she was seated.

“Mrs. Hayes, I’ve already talked to Agent Nelson, and it seems to me the FBI could save a ton of money if we did our monthly training in Reno instead of sending agents every month for a weekend in San Francisco. Since the ATF has also expressed an interest in local training, I’m authorized to hire you as a consultant/Instructor for the FBI. You’ll have no official FBI status, but you will be authorized to instruct FBI agents in any way you see fit. It’s up to the officers to determine the legality of your training, so you don’t have to worry about legal issues or Professional Liability. We are prepared to offer you the same terms as the ATF, and would like you to start ASAP. One thing we can do for you is to upgrade your state CCW to a Federal CCW. It doesn’t make much sense to have you leave your weapon outside the building if you need to visit me or another agent in the building since we trust you to train our agents. By the way, nice job with those Terrorists in Winnemucca. I know a lot of Mormon FBI Agents who would like to shake your hand if they get a chance. I’ll e-mail you a contract for your review. If you have any questions, my number will be on the cover letter.” With that, Agent Williams stood up, shook her hand, and escorted her to the front door, and told her how to get back to the elevators to the parking garage. No reason to go through security on the way out, so she could bypass it. He thanked her, and then she walked away to the bank of elevators down to the parking garage.

When she got back to the truck, she put her holster and mag carrier back on, and slid her Emerson CQC folder in her blouse pocket since she decided to go shopping while she was in Reno. She had a long list of items, and went to a Sporting goods store first to stock up on several items she needed to restock emergency kits. Then she drove over to Costco and filled several flat dollies full of staples, first aid items and canned goods. She bought some more miscellaneous supplies while she was there as well, just to be on the safe side. When she had finished, she thought it was a good thing Darrell was bringing home so much money, or he would have a fit about all the supplies she was buying. According to her calculations, she now had almost 2 years worth of supplies on hand for the 2 of them, and Steve and Susan were similarly stocked up. When she drove home, the bed of the truck was so full that she needed to tarp it down and secure the tarp with rope. She really did a good job, since she didn't want anything flying out at 80mph on the way home. When she got there, Manny helped her unload the truck, and commented on her extensive storage.

"Manny, none of this stuff will go bad any time soon, and if the poop does hit the fan, I want to be as prepared as possible. You and Maria would be well advised to do the same, especially since you have a large family."

Manny admitted they only had 6 months worth of food in the house, and almost no supplies.

"Manny, Darrell and I are rolling in money with virtually no expenses. Make a list of stuff you need, and Maria and I can go to Reno next week and pick it up. Consider it a gift from Darrell and I."

"Jackie, we couldn't accept Charity - are you sure?"

"Manny, Darrell and I never had any kids, so we've kind of adopted your family anyway if you haven't noticed already. We deliberately bought extra just in case, but our basement is getting full. We'd be much better off if you bought more stuff and stored it at your place. I mean for crying out loud, we're only talking about a couple of thousand dollars here."

"OK, I'll ask Maria - Muchas Gracias Señora Hayes!"

Chapter 36

Later that afternoon, Jackie called the Sheriff. "Got a minute Sheriff?"

"Sure Jackie, what's on your mind?"

"The ATF and the FBI want me to instruct their agents 2 days a month in Reno, I can assume this is your doing - I just have one question. With Kerry coming into the White House in January, are you sure it's a good idea to get in bed with the Feds?"

"Jackie, I wouldn't have set this up if I didn't think this was a good idea. I know both those guys, and neither one of them is going anywhere soon, since they won't brown nose enough to move up. They're both good guys, and I'd trust them anytime. Anything else?"

"Nope, thanks for the reassurance! Talk to you later."

Jackie hung up, and checked her e-mail. There were 2 emails in her inbox, 1 from ATF, and 1 from the FBI - they worked fast. Jackie read the e-mails then forwarded them to Jim so he could review it. Jackie almost flipped when she saw how much the feds paid per hour. She was getting \$800 dollars a day for an 8 hour class - that worked out to \$100 per hour, and the Feds were renting the range, so she didn't have to pay for anything. They paid 50 cents a mile, and \$200 per day for food and lodging. Nice being on the federal payroll. Jackie didn't see anything glaring with the contract, and was surprised by the hold harmless agreement absolving her of any legal responsibility for the use of her training. She wondered if it would hold up in court, or if some shyster lawyer could find a way to make her liable if one of her students used deadly force. She sent an e-mail to Jim asking him to check on Professional Liability insurance costs. Maybe that was why the feds paid so much, because the Insurance companies were gouging on PL policies for shooting instructors. She didn't have one for the Sheriff's dept, so she probably wouldn't need one now, but it was always good to check. One thing that did bother her was that the training was going to be at the range owned by that guy who was hitting on her, maybe if she made it crystal clear she wasn't interested, and she was packing, that he'd leave her alone!

When Jackie was finished with business, Max walked in, and made sure she knew he wanted to play. She took him outside to burn off some of that Puppy Energy. Half an hour later, she was almost as tired as he was, so they went inside. Jackie decided to start dinner, so it would be ready when Darrell came home from work, then did some household chores. Having Max around also meant she needed to clean up more often. She and Darrell could keep things reasonably clean if it was just the two of them, but Max was a 4-legged tornado, and stirred up dust and re-arranged the furniture. She got everything done about ½ hour before Darrell came home, so she sat down to catch a breather. When Darrell came home, Max woke up and charged Darrell, knocking him down and slobbering all over him. When Darrell regained his

balance, he had a wrestling match with Max, and if there were judges present, they'd call it a draw. Jackie announced "Dinner's Ready," so Darrell washed up, and Max tried to make him wash his hands again, but Darrell successfully avoided him. Jackie set up a bowl of dog food for Max so he would leave them alone and let them eat in peace. Jackie took the pot roast out of the crock pot, and plated dinner. As soon as they finished, Max wanted to play again. Darrell went into the bedroom to change before he got his good clothes really messed up, then came back in sweats, and played with Max until they wore each other out. Jackie was glad Darrell had a new friend, since he had nearly worn her out. When they went to bed, Jackie and Darrell cuddled for a while, then he rolled over and was sound asleep. She followed minutes later.

The next morning, she walked over to Manny's place to talk with Manny and Maria. Manny showed her the list they had finished. Jackie asked if Manny minded if she took a look at their storage, in case they missed anything. Maria said "no problema", and led Jackie to their basement. There was an inventory sheet hung from the nearest rack, and a basement full of stuff. Jackie helped her do a quick inventory, and added some items to the list, and added more of some items she had on the list. Jackie wasn't kidding when she said that she wanted them to have enough stuff for her entire family for a year. Seeing all the stored flour she had an idea. When she got back home, she located a retailer in Reno that sold exactly what she was looking for, but didn't say anything to Manny or Maria. She wanted it to be a surprise. That afternoon, they all met at the range for their weekly shooting practice. Since they were all shooting well, Jackie spent the time practicing her shooting, especially with the AR-10T on the 600 yard targets. She was hitting the little 600 yard targets 1 out of 3 rounds, but she was getting better. Manny could hit between 1 and 3 out of 3 depending on how much sleep he had, and how much coffee he drank that morning. Darrell was between Jackie and Manny. The three of them figured they could put a round "Minute of Terrorist" out to 600 yards whenever they needed to. None of them was good enough to make head shots outside 300 yards. Manny's sons practiced with the Mossberg 590, because Maria had told them it was their job to protect the rest of the kids, since she would be out in a fighting hole protecting them. They routinely hit the targets out to 25 yards with buckshot, and started working the 100 yard line with slugs. Manny called a halt to shotgun practice for the day since they were low on shotgun ammo with 200 rounds of buckshot and 50 slugs left. Jackie had ordered some more, but with the Terrorist Alert and Kerry's upcoming election, large quantities of shotgun ammo, or ammo of any kind, were getting hard to get. The ammo plants were running 3 shifts just to keep up with demand. Finally 2 days later, the Federal tactical 00 Buck and 1 oz slugs showed up. They had ordered 2 cases of 00 and 1 case of slugs. Jackie had plenty of S&B 00 Buck ammo just in case, but she didn't want to use that except in an emergency.

Since Maria was already to go, they went shopping in Reno the next day. Jackie got to practice her Spanish for 3 hours, and Maria's English was getting noticeably better. When Jackie asked her, Maria said since she was homeschooling her kids, she was taking the time to read English textbooks, and was picking up the English slowly but surely. Jackie asked Maria if she'd like some help homeschooling their children, since Jackie was bored and was running out of things to do when she wasn't teaching shooting classes or acting as a gopher for the company. Maria

remembered the slang, and had a good laugh imagining Jackie with buck teeth chewing on roots. Maria said she would love the help and the company, and to come on over whenever she could. Trying to teach 6 teenagers could be a three-ring circus at times. When they got to Reno, Jackie told Maria she wanted to make a stop first, and pulled into the Preparedness store she had found on the internet. She grabbed a huge cart, and started putting stuff in it. She picked up a Katadyn Voyager filter and a spare element, 3 dozen white plastic buckets with lids, a box of desiccant and oxygen absorbers, and a roll of Mylar bags designed to fit the 5-gallon buckets. She picked up a table mount grain grinder with a hand crank and grinding stones instead of steel burrs. She had a big burly clerk throw 500 pounds of whole wheat berries and 500 pounds of white rice on another cart. She grabbed a couple of other items, and paid for it with a personal check. When they got to the truck, she had the clerk load it, and then she turned to Maria and said “Feliz Navidad, Maria!”

Maria looked at her uncomprehending, so Jackie tried it in English - “Merry Christmas Maria, consider it an early Christmas present.”

Maria finally understood, but was stunned. “Senora Hayes, this is too much!”

“Nonsense. Like I told Manny, Darrell and I never had any kids, so we’ve sort of adopted your family. We’ve got more money than we know what to do with, and we wanted to make sure your family was well taken care of. This is just the tip of the iceberg. Wait until you see the amount of stuff we’re going to grab at Costco!”

Maria was thinking to herself, “Madre de Dios, these rich crazy Americans. A family in Mexico could live on what she just spent at that store for a year. I really should be grateful, and not wondering if she has an ulterior motive like those Missionaries did - trying to come into our village and change our way of life. Jackie hasn’t tried to change us, so far all she’s done is give Manny a good job, and give us a place to live when we were about to have to move back to California and live with relatives. God is good, and he’s still taking care of us, even if I don’t see it immediately.”

When they arrived at Costco, Jackie threw a tarp over the bed, and tied it down, then set the vehicle’s alarm. They were right in front of the door, so she hoped that no one would try anything. 2 hours later, they wheeled 2 carts full of stuff. Maria was amazed at what they could buy for a little over \$1,000.00. She now had enough food to feed her family for a year, and even some “cousins”. A clerk helped them load the truck, and they were on their way back to Winnemucca. “Maria, I know you’ll be tempted to give most of this stuff away to deserving cousins, but it’s meant to be stored for your family. If things get as bad as I think they might, we might be needing this stuff sooner than later. When Kerry becomes President, who knows what might happen. If this country collapses, things could get ugly, and we might have to survive on what we have physically on the ranch. If you want stuff to give away, let me know, and we can give Manny a raise suitable for you to maintain your standard of living, and help out your cousins.”

“Gracias de Dios, Senora Hayes, I’ve many needy cousins in Winnemucca and in California. It’s hard to say no, but my children need to eat too!”

“Maria, how much money would you need each month to take care of your needy cousins?”

“If I had an additional \$500 per month, we could do a lot with that.”

“OK, I’ll talk to Darrell, and we’ll make the raise retroactive to the first of the year, so you can use the money for whatever you need.”

“Gracias, Jackie - but why are you being so nice to us?”

“Maria, if it weren’t for Manny and your cousins, we wouldn’t be having this conversation.” Jackie went on to explain how Manny designed the defenses of the compound, and had his cousins build it. Maria was surprised, evidently Manny didn’t tell her.

“Maria, please don’t be mad at Manny for not telling you. What he did could be considered illegal, but it saved our lives.”

“Who’s worried about legal - most of us in Winnemucca are here illegally anyway. When he got this job, Manny put in his Citizenship paperwork for the whole family under an amnesty program. In 3 years if all goes well, Manny and I will be citizens. All our children are already citizens since they were born here with birth certificates. This is our home.”

They spent the rest of the trip talking about girl stuff and preparedness. Jackie had insisted on buying a case of TP and a dozen boxes of feminine stuff for Maria and her daughters. Jackie told her that if they had a year’s worth of food, but not a year’s worth of TP, their butts were going to be pretty sore. Maria got a good laugh out of that. When they got to the ranch, Manny helped them unload. Seeing the bed of the truck stuffed full, Manny couldn’t believe the generosity of Jackie and her husband. When Maria told Manny that they were going to give him an additional \$500 a month raise so they could help their cousins, Manny crossed himself and whispered “Gracias a Dios!” When they had unloaded everything, Jackie drove over to the office to see Darrell. Sally’s office looked different, then she realized the big radios weren’t cluttering up her desk - they had moved them to the security desk. Jackie looked and was glad to see that she still had her Witness Protection Shotgun. She walked into Darrell’s Office.

“Darrell, can we give Manny a \$500 a month raise? I was talking to Maria, and she was telling me about all the poor Mexican families here in Winnemucca that they were trying to help, but they didn’t have enough money. I bought Manny and Maria enough supplies to last a year like the rest of us have. I was worried that she would wind up giving most of it away, so I asked her, and she said that if they had another \$500 a month, they would be able to help the poorer families in town, and not have to give away stuff they might need later. I think it’s a good idea, but it’s up to you.”

“Jackie, the corporation is rolling in money, how about we give him an additional \$800 a month! Also, if his kids graduate high school, and want to go to college, we should establish a trust fund to pay for their education. I’m sure Jim could set up something so we could do it and get some tax breaks for it.”

Jackie gave her husband a big hug and a kiss, and thought that if he didn’t wear himself out playing with Max, he might even get lucky tonight! She whispered something in his ear, and Darrell’s smile could have lit the room. He kissed her again, but she scampered out of reach. He had work to do, so she’d have to take a rain check until tonight. Jackie drove over to Manny and Maria’s house to give them the good news. She was glad they were sitting down, because they would have fallen on the floor if they weren’t. When they recovered, the normally reserved couple gave Jackie a bear hug she would have never believed. They were both crying so much that she couldn’t understand what they were saying, but she caught the gist of it, they were thanking her very profusely in Spanish.

Jackie told them “We believe in taking care of our employees, and you guys are way more than employees, you’re friends!”

That brought out another series of crying, hugging, and thanks. Finally Jackie couldn’t take it any longer, and started crying too. When they regained their composure, Jackie said she had to go before she started crying again, and left just in the nick of time.

Since the last terrorist strike, things had pretty much returned to normal in the USA, but appearances can be deceiving. All around the world, radical Moslems who had survived the attacks were planning and preparing. Cheney was acting as a caretaker president, just biding his time until Kerry took over. The Military was in poor shape, with poor morale, lousy wages, and too many overseas deployments to places that the average American had ever heard of. Their commanders knew that as soon as Kerry and all those Liberal Democrats got into office, the Military as we knew it was doomed. Sure he might keep a few divisions around for peacekeeping, but most of the heavy armor and heavy attack and bomber wings were going to be eliminated. Kerry really believed his own press, and thought that World Peace had broken out. If he had simply listened to his Generals instead of the hanky-waving brown-nosers who told him what he wanted to hear, he would have found out that the Moslem radicals in Europe had gotten together with the large populations of Muslims in Southeastern Europe, Turkey, and the “stans”, and were plotting revenge. While they didn’t have the access to WMDs like the previous bunch did, they had numbers, and a willingness to die with nothing more than an AK-47 in their hands. Thanks to the former Soviet Union, there were hundreds of millions of AK-47s in the hands of potential terrorists, since they were common as mud around the world. Jackie wasn’t the only person in the USA who was quietly preparing, and all over the Nation, people who had never bought a gun before, or bought emergency supplies were buying everything they could in huge quantities. Jackie was able to keep the propane, diesel and jet fuel tanks full only because she had connections. Prices were going up because demand was high, not for use, but storage. Someone had decided to share the knowledge that propane stores

indefinitely in a proper container, so there was a run on propane tanks, generators, stoves, dryers, etc. that the manufacturers were having difficulty keeping up with. Long-term storage food was getting difficult to find, as were large #10 cans of food. Plastic buckets and water barrels were next to impossible to find. Batteries, flashlights and even candles were getting scarce. Things had gone from bad to worse, and Kerry wasn't even in office yet - This was a "Self-fulfilling Prophecy" in action. People THOUGHT there were or would soon be shortages of various items, and created the very shortages they thought would happen, or were happening.

Jackie counted their blessings. They had plenty of Ammo, food, medical supplies, clothing, misc. supplies, and everything they would need to survive several years without outside support. They were basically self-sufficient as long as their supplies lasted. Manny had the security level as high as he could go and still get any work done as New Years Eve rolled around. No one felt much like celebrating, and the security bunker was manned by anyone not sleeping. Finally around 2am, they decided that nothing would happen tonight, and went to bed.

Chapter 37

New Years Eve, and New Years Day passed uneventfully, so everyone's guard was down when CNN came on the air at 8:00am PST on January 3, 2005 with live coverage of a major Terrorist attack in the New York Subway system. Several canisters of Sarin were deposited in subway cars overnight. They were well hidden, and were missed during routine inspections of the cars before the morning rush hour. There wasn't enough Sarin in the canisters to kill many people, but the terrorists were counting on the resulting stampede to do the damage. They could have used almost anything, but had spare Sarin canisters around, so they used them. Maybe 50 people died from the Sarin, but thousands died in the resulting panic. News broadcasts inflamed the already panicked New Yorkers, who further compounded the problem by trying to flee New York all at once. One little incident in a large city resulted in mass casualties due to panic.

New York City was not alone, and thousands of big cities were attacked with human suicide bombers. The attacks were totally random, with the exception that all the targets were in heavily crowded areas. The panic was such that the National Guard could not control it, and Dick Cheney didn't feel he was in a position to take positive steps to control it, since President Kerry was to be sworn in a little over 2 weeks. The terrorists had exploited this political vulnerability to the maximum, and now US Citizens were going to reap the revenge of Islam!

In other areas, AK armed gunman opened fire on Elementary Schools, Hospitals, Airports, Casinos, and any other soft targets they could find. Several were shot by armed civilians, but thanks to the ongoing attempts to disarm America, there weren't enough armed citizens to go around, and the police were overwhelmed by the sheer number of 911 calls, some of which were deliberate hoaxes called in by Muslim sympathizers left in the USA. Hospitals were overwhelmed with casualties, and it was then the terrorists chose to attack, masquerading as victims, then detonating bomb vests, killing hundreds of doctors, nurses, and patients.

Jackie and Darrell watched in horror as the United States as they knew it unraveled at the seams. Las Vegas and Reno had both been targeted by terrorists. The terrorists didn't do so well in Reno, since there were so many armed civilians around thanks to Nevada's "shall issue" CCW laws. Las Vegas, on the other hand, was a total disaster since the City fathers had deemed concealed weapons were not necessary in Lost Wages, and the only people with guns were Mobsters, or City officials, who unfortunately were no where near the scene, and managed to survive. Winnemucca and the rest of Northeastern Nevada had so far escaped damage or attack, but Jackie guessed that this was only Phase 1 of the new round of attacks. Once the broadcast had started to repeat, she asked Darrell to call a meeting of everyone in the compound at 10:30 in the Conference room.

A bunch of very nervous and extremely upset people met in the Conference Room at 10:30. Luckily this time Darrell had his wooden gavel, because he needed it to call the meeting to order. Once he had their attention, Jackie stood up and addressed the crowd.

“OK everyone, here’s the situation as we know it. Every major city in the US with over a million population has been hit. Some worse than others. So far the only cities in Nevada to get hit were Las Vegas and Reno. For some unknown reason they skipped Carson City, which would have disrupted the state government. Anyway, we have apparently survived Round 1 unscathed, but that doesn’t mean we aren’t on the target list for rounds 2,3, and 4! Manny, I need your help - do you think it would do any good to shut down the compound and activate the anti-terrorist devices?”

“Jackie, I can pretty much guarantee they won’t come through the front door again, unless they are really stupid. On the other hand, they just might be. I’d say the best solution is to activate all security measures effective right now, and seal the compound. No one goes in or out of the compound without my say so! We should go to Yellow Alert status as well, and everyone should carry their sidearms and be able to get to the Security Bunker within 5 minutes. Keep your radios on, and if you hear anything, get to the bunker as fast as possible. Once we seal this bunker, it will take a Nuclear Bomb to get in here. We’ve got enough devices to take out any conventional Terrorist attacks before they get close to the bunker, and if they get too close, we have a couple of surprises for them as well. We’ve got enough food, water, and air down here to last a month easy. The only way someone could get in here without us seeing them is if they were to try a parachute assault, and if I remember correctly, I didn’t know too many Ragheads that were willing to jump out of a perfectly good plane. Most of the ones that would were vaporized when GW blew the crap out of the Middle East.”

The meeting broke up soon after that, then Manny, Jackie, and Darrell met in private.

Darrell spoke first “Ok, Manny, if you were the terrorists and wanted to attack this place, how would you do it?”

“OK, Darrell, but first of all, you have to realize that the terrorists we are facing now aren’t the ones we were facing last time. The last bunch could be described as professional terrorists, except for the bunch of Cannon Fodder they sent into a suicidal frontal assault of the compound. These guys aren’t motivated by the “big picture” - they’re mad at America since George Bush blew up their homelands. The Moslems that have lived in Europe for generations still consider the Middle East their homeland much as the Jews living in the United States consider Israel their homeland. Even though GW took full responsibility for the nuclear attack, they don’t see it that way - in their mind the Christians in America attacked the Moslems in the Middle East, since we left Israel alone. They are motivated 100% by revenge, and just want to take as many Americans with them as they can. The only solution to this kind of attacker is to kill him before he kills you. Luckily for us even the European Moslems hadn’t intermarried with European women, and still look like they are from the Middle East. I hate to say this since a lot of innocent people are going to die, but the best way to ensure your survival is to shoot anyone who looks Middle Eastern, even women and children. I know that is going to be a big problem for most Americans since we believe we’re above that sort of fighting, but a Special Forces friend of mine once said was the reason the SEALs were so effective in Vietnam is they weren’t

above fighting dirty. Their unofficial motto should be “Just Win Baby!” In this kind of warfare, there are no Marquis of Queensbury rules, or referees. The winners will be the survivors, and you had better be prepared to do whatever it takes to survive.”

“What about President-elect Kerry?”

“Darrell, my honest opinion is Kerry couldn’t manage a Mexican Brothel, and has no business being the President of the United States. I’ll bet the first thing he does when he gets into office is ban all personal weapons of all calibers. And the second thing he’ll do is loose the JBT’s in the Federal Government to seize all privately owned arms.”

“But Manny, we’re in the middle of a War!”

“Kerry won’t see it that way - he’ll think if we were nicer to the Arabs, they’d be nicer to us, so he will probably also strip the military to levels below the levels they were at during the Clinton administration. If you remember correctly, Saddam Hussein came to the forefront during the Clinton Administration, and Madeline All-Stupid tried to play nice-nice with him, instead of telling him if he even thought of attacking Kuwait, we would nuke him back into the Stone Age. It happens every time a Democrat gets in office. They destroy the military, then get us involved in a war!”

Darrell was going to rebut Manny, then realized he was probably right - after all, for the last 20 years all he had heard was the Left Wing’s side of the story.

“OK, Manny - but where does that leave us?”

“Up Chit Creek without a Paddle!”

Jackie jumped in at this point “Why do you think that Manny?”

“One of three things are going to happen: The ATF goons are going to come storming in here with more firepower then they had a Waco, or else the Terrorists are going to come in here armed to the teeth and prepared to die, or the Worst case - The ATF will disarm us, and then the Terrorists will hit the survivors when they’re defenseless!”

“Manny, you’re such an Optimist sometimes!”

Manny and Jackie had a good laugh, but Darrell couldn’t figure out what was so funny - they had just described 3 scenarios that would have meant the death or imprisonment of all the people in the compound. Darrell didn’t understand Gallows Humor.

Later that afternoon, everyone decided to get in some extra target practice. Jackie checked the Propane, Diesel, and Jet Fuel tanks, and they were all more than 80% full. They had over

30,000 gallons of propane (Jackie had picked up a used 30,000 gallon propane tank cheap, and added it to the 10K tank. Both were “desert filled” to 80% of capacity) and 20,000 gallons of Diesel with Pri-D added at the Distributor’s, as well as 10,000 gallons of Jet Fuel for the airplane. Between all the solar panels on the buildings, the 20 400-watt wind turbines in the wind farm, and the 20KW diesel generator plus the 5KW PTO generator, they had more than enough power. If they could keep Terrorists or the Fedgov JBT’s from blowing them sky high, they were set!

Dateline: January 3, 2005 Ankara, Turkey

A meeting of the Revolutionary Council was taking place in a small out of the way café in small rural town where everyone knew everyone else by sight, and a foreigner would immediately be suspect. Even still, their security was as airtight as they could make it. They had no allusions that the CIA or the other spy agencies had rolled over and played dead just because peace had broken out.

A debate was raging among the members of the Council. Some wanted to destroy the US outright, and others just wanted to continue the Terrorist attacks. The main problem before them was technological, how does a 3rd World Country go about destroying a World Power? Their leader, an Iranian Ayatollah who had been living in France when George bush vaporized the rest of his countrymen, was a minor official before the attacks. Now that he was one of the few surviving Ayatollahs, he was thrust into a leadership position. He was barely qualified for his old position, and was clearly over his head. He constantly asked his Security Head constantly what they should do. What they didn’t know was his Head of Security used to be a major player in Savak, the Iranian Secret Police, and was only nominally a Moslem. His agenda included personal world domination, and if he had to use these yo-yos to get there, he would. Every chance he got, he turned the conversation into a direction that promoted his plan. He wanted the US weakened, not destroyed. There was no point in being the ruler of a wasteland. He had provided Ayatollah Rastafari Mohammed with a list of targets that should be stuck next. They argued and argued, and finally agreed to the target list, just like he knew they would. They were Ideologists, not warriors.

Chapter 38

On January 20, 2005 Senator Kerry became President Kerry and Senator Edwards became Vice President Edwards. Senator Kennedy had sent out invitations to the Democratic Elite for a huge weekend long party celebrating their return to power the weekend of the 28th at the Kennedy compound in Martha's Vineyard. The Secret Service forbade President Kerry or the Vice President to attend, since they couldn't secure the compound against the current elevated threat. None of the Democratic Senators and most of the Congressmen who were invited could resist however, and it was a veritable who's-who list of the Democratic Ruling Elite. The party was scheduled to start Friday night and continue right on through Sunday. The level of decadence at this party was rumored to have exceeded all previous elitist parties, with nude entertainment being one of the tamest forms of entertainment. Unfortunately for the party goers, and fortunately for the country, a very wealthy ultra-conservative "Patriot" learned of the party far enough in advance to implement a plan he had put together just in case something like this would have happened. He knew in his heart that if the Democrats controlled the country at this critical juncture, they would destroy it in the name of rebuilding it in their warped image. He spent \$10 Million of his personal fortune making sure that would never happen. Months before, workmen showed up on Martha's Vineyard with work orders to install natural gas connections for new construction. They emplaced the taps, covered the trenches and left. No one bothered to check, since the Secret Service was busy elsewhere.

Saturday night at midnight, at the height of the party, the timers on the taps completed their countdowns, and opened the Natural gas taps, venting thousands of pounds of Natural gas into the atmosphere within minutes. Senator Kennedy was so drunk by then that he didn't recognize the smell as coming from a Natural Gas leak, and thought to himself that someone should open a window, and should have had better manners and dropped that stinky bomb outside. He walked out on the balcony and pulled out his gold-plated lighter to light a \$200 Cuban import Cigar and blew the entire party into orbit when he pressed the ignition switch. Hillary's last thought was that if she would have brought her broom, she could have landed safely.

The next morning CNN attributed the huge explosion to a Terrorist Attack. The millionaire had accomplished his mission, and the news media had completed the cover-up for him. President Kerry was stunned. Without the "Gang of 12" most of the legislation he wanted to pass was doomed. He could still try, but with total destruction of the upper echelons of the Democratic Party, the replacements would be very junior Senators without all the connections the Gang of 12 had developed over the years. If the Republicans didn't roll over, they could effectively block most of his legislation, like Gay Rights, Homosexual Marriage, expansions of the Welfare State, and banning of School Prayer. He still thought he could do something about those damn gun owners. He was furious, they had stymied the Democrat's plans for a one-world government for decades, now it was going to get set back for at least another 4 years while he revived the Democratic party. He called the Director of the ATF and gave him his orders. They could do anything they had to, but he wanted the FFL dealers out of business, then he'd work on

disarming America.

Phase II of the destruction of America had started with the terrorists destroying the power grid that had just been re-built. They attempted to destroy Hoover dam, but miscalculated the strength of the dam, and all the 5 50-gallon drums of ANFO did was shoot huge plumes of water up from the inside of the dam. Security forces were slow to respond, but made up for their slowness with firepower, and shredded the terrorist team with a Ma Deuce equipped Hummer before they could try anything else. Other teams were more successful, and found weak points in several city water systems, and contaminated the water with Cholera microbes and other bugs. The big cities were in a big hurt with millions of sick people, no power, and doctors who had to be ordered at gunpoint to return to work. California was hurt the worst, because the 1-2 punch of losing all electric power and the Cholera epidemic coincided with one of the driest winters in California history. Governor Swartzenegger was at his wit's end to find a solution. His attorney general was recommending Martial law, since the police were incapable of handling all the demands already. Arnold wasn't ready to throw in the towel just yet, and decided instead to activate the California National Guard for disaster duty.

Governor Guinn of Nevada was receiving hourly updates on casualty figures in Reno and Las Vegas. He noticed that while the populations were comparable, the casualty rate was 10 times higher in Las Vegas. Confused, he asked his AG why there were so many more casualties in Las Vegas. He explained to the Governor that Reno fully supported the State's Shall issue CCW policy, and has no restrictions other than State law about carrying guns and other weapons, whereas Las Vegas, and for that matter all of Clark County was almost as bad as California. Most of the Terrorist attacks in Reno were quickly stopped, usually by an armed citizen, whereas the attacks in Las Vegas continued until a Security Guard or Policeman arrived on the scene, or until the terrorist ran out of ammo or targets. Governor Guinn shook his head. Then his AG told him President Kerry was probably going to try to disarm Nevada. Kenny's head snapped up, and with fire in his eyes he said "Over my dead body! Make sure that all Nevada Law Enforcement Officials get the word that they are to resist any attempts by the Federal Government to disarm lawful citizens of Nevada, and to arrest the Federal Agents if necessary. Get me the Agent in Charge of the ATF in Reno.

"Good Morning ATF, Agent in Charge Nelson Speaking."

"Agent Nelson, this is Governor Guinn."

"Yes Governor, what can I do for you?"

"We need to have a meeting of the minds here - are you OK to talk or would you rather meet in person?"

"Governor Guinn, I can assure you this phone call is not monitored or recorded, you dialed my personal number that bypasses the switchboard, so we're relatively free to talk."

“Very well, My AG says that your new boss might try to disarm law abiding Nevadans. I think that would be a very bad idea.”

“I agree totally Governor, and I can assure you I’ll do everything in my power to stop that from happening, at least no ATF officer under my jurisdiction will be involved.”

“Great what if they send some JBTs from out of state?”

“Governor, if anyone wearing an ATF uniform is abusing the Civil Rights of Nevadans, you are free to do whatever you feel is necessary, because my agents won’t be involved.”

“Thank you very much, Agent Nelson. If you need to reach me, please call me at (775) xxx-xxxx!”

“OK, Goodbye Governor, I’ll be in touch if I hear anything.”

Governor Guinn turned to his AG “Well that went fairly painlessly!”

“Kenny, I’ve known Agent James Nelson for years, he’s a straight shooter, and he’s risen as high as he is going to. He absolutely refuses to brown-nose, or allow the JBT tactics some of the other AICs encourage from their Agents. If he says that none of his agents will be involved, you can take him at his word. Also you note that he never did say the ATF wouldn’t do that - because all they have to do is bring in out-of-state agents, especially some JBT’s, and start confiscating weapons. You also remember that he said to do whatever was necessary. He’s covertly endorsing imprisoning, or shooting “rogue” ATF agents here without the approval of the local AIC, technically they are operating out of jurisdiction, and we can arrest them, and if they resist, you can use deadly force to defend ourselves.”

“Yeah, but how will those Liberal idiots in Las Vegas act?”

“Kenny, as the AG, I can order the Sheriff’s and Police Chiefs not to cooperate. I cannot order them to shoot federal officers. My guess is the ATF might wind up sending a bunch of agents home in body bags without our support! That reminds me, we need to notify the COs of the Nevada National Guard not to cooperate with the ATF either - that will prevent them from pulling a Waco, and suckering in NG armor to do their dirty work for them.”

“OK, make it happen - I’ll sign anything you need signed.”

Governor Guinn made a phone call to the Governor of Utah, who agreed 100%. Neither state would cooperate with the ATF if they tried to confiscate weapons. Governor Guinn was going to call Governor Swartzenegger, but figured that even if he was a moderate to conservative governor, he was hamstrung by all the Liberals in Sacramento. He was wondering how many “refugees” from California they might expect. The last 6 months had shown a massive influx of

Conservative Gun owners from California. Over a Million Californians had permanently moved to Nevada to avoid whatever Kerry had in store for them, since the State of California was the most anti-gun state in the Western US, they were sure that their legislature would go along with anything Kerry proposed, so they voted with their feet. Luckily most of them were highly skilled workers, and some companies were relocating to Nevada as well, since the business owners had seen the writing on the wall.

Jackie had taken the Sheriff's word that Agent Nelson wouldn't have anything to do with any confiscation scheme, but she figured all the ATF had to do was bring in agents from out of state. She wasn't comfortable shooting Federal Agents, but she realized if they showed up at their ranch, it wouldn't be to sell Girl Scout Cookies. Someone was going home in a body bag, and she wanted to make sure it was the other guy! She had a talk with Manny, and they agreed to keep the surveillance aircraft up 24/7. They could keep a 20 mile radius under surveillance with the number of aircraft they had. Next to the radio and monitors was a huge battery bank with a fast charger to keep the batteries fully charged. The daytime aircraft needed less power than the night time, and could be left up for 12 hours if the weather was sunny. The nighttime aircraft had to have the batteries replaced every 6 hours, but they had enough of them to easily keep 3 in the air at all times. Jackie wouldn't put it past Kerry to try to confiscate all weapons while they were engaged in a war with Moslem Terrorists.

It turned out it wasn't the ATF attacking after all, but the ranch got a call on their 2-meter ham radio one afternoon.

"Dun Movin Ranch, this is Lazy J Ranch, just thought you'd like to know there's a bunch of pickup trucks driving real fast down the ranch road to your northeast. We can see the dust clouds from here, and my Ranch Manager said they looked like a bunch of Towelheads. Anyway, that road leads right into the back 1,000 acres of your ranch. You've got about half an hour until they get to you. I'll call the Sheriff for you, so don't worry about that. Lazy J out!"

The guy on the Security Watch reached over and hit the Klaxon button that sounded the Air raid siren, then he got on the radio and contacted the ranch hands, and told them they had 20 minutes to get the herd to the southwest corner of the range, trouble was on the way from the Northeast. They didn't need to be told twice, and galloped up to the herd to stampede them deliberately. The cattle needed to be moved quickly, and while running them was dangerous, leaving them where they were was lethal. If the terrorists didn't get them, Manny's toys would. The cattle dogs helped round up any strays and kept them moving southwest. Both of them had AR-15's in their saddlebags, but their job was to protect the herd and themselves, not get involved in a firefight. The AR-15's were for shooting Coyotes and other 4-legged varmints. They got the herd out of the way with 10 minutes to spare, and everyone else was in the Bunker waiting to see what the Terrorists would do.

They must not have learned much from the last time, since they drove practically right up to the fence, and piled out like a bunch of Circus clowns. They were surprised when there was no

overt resistance. The place looked deserted, and they might have thought that they had already gone when all of a sudden what they thought were fence posts blew up, shooting shrapnel in an arc towards them. The initial blast killed or seriously wounded about half their number, and the rest quickly charged past the fence line, screaming Allah Akabar! They made it another 100 yards, then another series of explosions detonated in front of them. Several of them survived by diving into the nearest depression, but their numbers were greatly reduced. The few survivors weren't motivated to charge any further, and had managed to get themselves below the line of fire of the mortars, so a stalemate ensued, except everyone in the compound was under cover in the bunker, and they were out in the open, and as soon as they stood to move, Manny could fire another explosive to further decimate them. There was no retreat for them, since the first blast had destroyed their pickups. All they were armed with was AK-47's and hand grenades.

Manny knew the Sheriff would be there in about an hour, and didn't want the deputies to walk into a hot situation, so he called the Sheriff on the phone, and advised him of the situation, and for the deputies to stay away from the ranch, no closer than 5 miles down the ranch road, and to proceed Code 2 so they wouldn't be targets. The Sheriff told them the deputies would stay 5 miles down the ranch road until called in. Manny set himself in to wait out the remaining terrorists. Everyone else in the bunker decided a good game of cards or something would help pass the time, and broke out board games and cards to wait. As it got closer to dark, Manny was worrying about getting the daylight planes down and the night planes up, one of the operators suggested "buzzing" the terrorists with one of the planes to get them to stick their heads up. Manny thought it might be an idea, and told the operators to send one of the daylight planes down to buzz the terrorists' position. They had two planes orbiting their position, so the operator took one off autopilot, and spiraled it on down to 100 feet, and revved the motor to max at the bottom of the dive. Just like he thought, the Dummies stood up to fire at the plane, thinking they were under attack. As soon as they stood up, Manny fired another pipe mortar and wiped the rest of them out.

30 minutes later, he signaled "All Clear" and called the deputies in with Lights and Sirens in case there were any Terrorists left alive. As the deputies vehicles pulled up running code 3, Manny scanned the camera over the battlefield, and no one was moving. He figured that if anyone was alive, they'd recognize the sound of the sirens and attempt to flee. Manny asked for volunteers to assist the deputies in making sure the intruders were indeed dead. Darrell, Jackie, Steve and Susan volunteered. Manny knew that the 4 of them were enough, since he didn't expect any resistance. Still he insisted they put on their vests. They all piled into Jackie's truck that still had the scorched paint job, and drove out to the battlefield. Manny stopped Jackie well back from the kill zone to make sure they were out of range in case anyone was still alive. Manny got out first, and pulled his .45. Anyone who showed signs of life was given a shot to the forehead, since he knew that they might be holding a grenade with the pin out. They searched the battlefield, and only 2 terrorists were showing enough signs of life to warrant a single shot. Manny shot them both, with the rest of the team covering him. The deputies were satisfied that they weren't needed, and they all regrouped at the Security Bunker for a debrief and formal statements. Manny called the Ranch hands and told them to avoid the scene of the

fight until morning when they could send out a tractor to bury the bodies, just in case they were hiding a live grenade. One of the deputies had a microcassette recorder, and took it out to record their statements. Manny did all the talking since he was the only one to actually see anything. The deputies knew basically what had happened by the damage done, and just needed Manny to fill in the blanks. Two hours and a couple of cups of coffee later, the deputies said they had to get back to the station and file their report, and everyone else was exhausted.

Chapter 39

The next morning, Manny fired up the tractor, dug a big hole, and pushed the bodies into it with the big blade. He felt it was the safest way to dispose of the bodies, since the big loader blade would hopefully stop the shrapnel from a grenade. Manny pushed all the bodies in without any explosions, and buried them, then spit on their graves for good measure.

When he came back to the compound, everyone was back at work as if nothing had happened, except everyone was now armed. 2 weeks ago, the other board members decided that it might be a good idea if they carried a P-14 too, so Jackie ordered them. The dealer had 2 left, so she was able to just pick them up with the holsters, mag carriers, and 2 spare mags each. Jackie had a dozen spares in storage, but didn't want to give those out until the new ones failed. The Sheriff was impressed; Jackie had managed to get all those Computer Geeks shooting well enough to qualify for a CCW and then some. He was equally impressed that they had fought off 2 Terrorist attacks without any casualties or even injuries. He just hoped the ATF would leave them alone - or some ATF agents might be going home in Body Bags!

Jackie was surprised when Agent Nelson called her up and asked her if she could teach a class next week. "Agent Nelson - you know there's an ongoing terrorist attack, we just survived our second attack in 3 months. Why would you want to schedule training now?"

"Jackie, I heard about the attack, glad everyone's OK. The attacks are why I want to schedule training, it seems several of my officers need remedial and advanced pistol shooting training. If security's an issue, we can put you up in a nice ATF safe house for the night, instead of staying in a hotel."

"Agent Nelson, I'll have to think about it. Can I get back to you?"

"Jackie, we really need this training. From what I've heard, any terrorist that meets up with you is going to wind up dead! Please try to make it!"

Jackie called the Sheriff and asked him what she should do. He told her, "Teach the class! You're less of a target on the road by yourself than you are at the compound."

She called Agent Nelson back and agreed to teach the class, and took him up on the offer of the ATF safe house. She had replaced her State CCW with her new Federal CCW in her purse when it came in the mail a few weeks ago. She would put her Witness Protection shotgun under the seat, since her Federal CCW didn't have any restrictions as to what weapons she could carry. She wondered how much an H&K MP-5SD would set her back! Maybe she could talk that nice FBI Agent into loaning her one.

When she arrived at the range the next week, the range was deserted except for ATF agents, and

the owner. Jackie had the owner open the conference room door, then she admitted the class and asked them to find seats. Once they were all seated, she introduced herself, and asked the agents what they wanted out of the class. 99% said they wanted to shoot better. They all were carrying their issue S&W .40 autos. Jackie asked them how many had actually shot someone. One wiseguy in the back asked "You mean on purpose?" and broke the entire class into hysterical laughter. Jackie said, "OK, you guys probably know how to shoot, or you wouldn't have made it this far. My job is to make you shoot better. Let's get eyes and ears, and hit the range." They all put on their eye and ear protection, then walked out to the range. She had 12 agents, and 12 lanes, so they were all able to shoot at once. She had them run a B-27 out to 15 yards, and fire a magazine of ammo. She stood back and watched them shoot. They were pretty good, but she could see a couple of minor mechanical problems, and one woman who had a major flinch. She decided to work with the woman first. She told her to unload her weapon, and point it downrange at the target, and hold her sights on the target. She then told her to cock her weapon, and then she put a quarter on the slide. She told her to pull the trigger without letting the quarter fall off the slide, and to keep doing it until she got 10 in a row. She was so nervous that she could barely manage once or twice. Jackie decided to take her off the shooting line and have a little chat with her. She told everyone else to go back to shooting, and she took the female agent back into the lobby.

"Agent Penton, you're more nervous than a long-tailed cat in a room full of rocking chairs, what gives?"

"I've never been comfortable shooting around men."

"Good neither have I, but I got over it! You're here because your AIC decided that his agents needed more practice, since you might wind up in a for-real shooting war, and you needed to shoot better. You need to calm down right now and get over this, or you'll never improve. You can do this; I've trained hundreds of women to shoot."

"OK, thanks for the pep talk Jackie - can we get back in there and try it?"

"Sure, after you Agent Penton."

Jackie followed her back into the shooting range, and all the agents were busy putting rounds down range. Agent Penton finally settled down, and did 5-10 her first try. "Keep at it, and when you go 10-10, let me know. I've got to go help someone else." Jackie moved on down the line, fixing grips, stances, and even one trigger pull. It was rare to see someone who had been an ATF agent who tried to pull the trigger like a shotgun instead of squeezing it. Once she fixed his trigger pull, his groups shrank back to where they belonged. By the end of the day, all the agents were shooting x-ring groups, and several had mastered the Failure to stop drill. Jackie was exhausted, and was glad to crash at the safe house. She ate dinner, took a shower, and crawled into bed. She set her alarm for 0600 the next morning, and went to sleep. When the alarm went off, she dragged herself into the shower, got dressed, and was glad someone had

made breakfast including a large pot of coffee for her. She made her bed, threw her overnight bag in the truck, and drove to the range. When she got there, the owner said “Hi” and that was the extent of their conversation. 10 minutes later, a dozen FBI agents walked into the building joking and laughing. Jackie said “Gentlemen, we’ve got a lot to do, and not much time, so let’s get to work. Everyone get your eyes and ears on, and meet me in the range.”

Again she had them set up B-27 targets, and run them out to 15 yards. After a couple of mags, she could tell they were much better shooters than the ATF people were. She had them reload, and run a fresh target out to 25 yards. The extra 10 yards made all the difference, and their mechanical problems became apparent. Most of them were shooting acceptable groups, they would have qualified, but she wanted them to shoot better. She went down the line making suggestions, and adjusting grips and stances. None of them had any problems learning from a woman. Seems the word had gotten out that she could have given lessons to Annie Oakley. Finally when everyone was shooting 10-ring or better 25 yard groups, she switched them to the Failure to stop drill. Most of them managed OK, but several of them almost put their third round in the ceiling. Jackie decided to work with them first. She had them tighten their grip and lock their wrists so the gun could only recoil straight back, and a little up. That took care of the ceiling shooters.

Next she brought out a club timer, so they could work on their speed and shot-to-shot interval. She went first to show them how it was done. First she ran a B-27 target out to the 25-yard line, then she had one of the agents hold the timer off to her left, and told him that after she had put her hands in the “surrender” position, he was to press the button. She walked to the line, turned to face the target, and the agent held the timer up to her left side about 3 feet away, and when she held her hands up, he pressed the button. As soon as she heard the buzzer, she dropped her right hand to her holster, pulled her gun out, slid smoothly into a Weaver stance, and less than a second later, the first round was out of the gun. As soon as the gun had settled on the center of the target, she squeezed off the second round a fraction of a second later, and triggered the third round while the barrel was still heading up, and put the third round right through the x-ring in the forehead. Her total time was 2.5 seconds, and her shot-shot interval was .55 seconds. It wasn’t as fast as she had done a FTS drill, but it was plenty fast enough to get the agent’s attention, especially when she hit the retrieve button, and all 3 rounds were in the appropriate x-rings. Some of the agents couldn’t believe their eyes. They were in no hurry to try their luck, but several of them did very well, with the fastest of them clocking a 2.65 FTS drill. Everyone was below three seconds, and she was glad to see that. By the end of the day, most of them had shaved several fractions of a second off their best time. One of the agents asked her to autograph her target, then he wrote her time score and the date below that, and explained they had a “hall of fame” downstairs with a framed target from each of their best instructors. There was one there by their HRT instructor, who shot a 2.19 second FTS drill. Jackie admitted she had shot a 2.4 FTS in competition once. He thought that her 2.5 second FTS was amazing, and he looked at her and shook his head - no wonder the Terrorists were 0-2 going up against her ranch.

When the class was over she got in her truck, and drove slightly over the speed limit to get back to the ranch as quickly as possible. She was listening to the radio, and was relieved when she didn't hear anything about any new attacks. When she got close enough to Winnemucca to hit a repeater, she called the ranch on her 2-meter ham radio, and gave them an ETA. They replied, "All's quiet on the Western Front" which was their code phrase for All Clear. If they had been captured and compromised, they were to say "All's quiet on the Eastern front." She arrived at the ranch about 2 hours later, and she locked the gate behind her. As soon as she was clear, she called the guard bunker, and they armed the anti-vehicle mine. When she walked in the door, Max flattened her, then Darrell picked her up off the carpet and gave her an even more enthusiastic welcome home. He admitted being worried for her every minute she was gone. Jackie assured Darrell that he had nothing to worry about, she was surrounded by armed men 24/7. Darrell even had dinner ready, and when they had eaten, he suggested a long soak in the hot tub. Jackie agreed, and took off her holsters, then stripped and raced him to the tub. Max decided that now would be a good time for a nap.

Chapter 40

When President Kerry heard the Nevada and Utah were refusing to assist ATF agents with seizing weapons, he had a major fit.

“Damn those traitorous SOB’s! Get my Attorney General in here!”

2 minutes later his lackey of an Attorney General was practically kowtowing in front of President Kerry.

“Why the hell haven’t we been able to seize guns in Utah and Nevada, now I hear the Governors are in open rebellion - can’t we send in the army?”

The AG didn’t know what to tell him. The Joint Chiefs got wind of Utah’s and Nevada’s refusal to assist the ATF, when he asked for Military assistance, the Joint Chiefs to a man told him to go stuff himself! The National Guard troops had been ordered to actively resist any attempt by the ATF to seize weapons. The first bunch of ATF JBTs that showed up in Reno were arrested, cuffed, taken to the California State line, and told not to come back! He was between a rock and a hard place. He figured the best thing to do was lie.

“Mr. President, I’m sure we can find a way to disarm the West, after all California is cooperating fully.”

That bit of news, while seriously exaggerated made President Kerry feel better - at least California was cooperating!

Actually what had happened was 2/3 of California was in open rebellion. Most of Southern California outside of Metropolitan LA was openly hostile to ATF and FBI agents. Anything that even looked like a fedmobile was targeted by sniper fire. Most FBI agents who were given orders to assist the ATF quit on the spot to their credit. Some were tempted to shoot their boss for giving an Unconstitutional order, but worried about the security goons right outside his door. The LAPD was ordered to assist, and several officers joined their counterparts in the FBI and quit on the spot. Unfortunately, there was a new breed of cops that had been raised to not think for themselves, and were willing to follow any order. Parts of Southern California became a war zone with ordinary citizens on one side, and ATF JBTs and those police who always followed orders. The ATF was amazed by how many Assault Rifles remained in Southern California, and the marksmanship of the people shooting at them. They took G. Gordon Liddy’s advice “How do you Greet the ATF when they knock on your door? Go for Head shots!” They had walked into a hornet’s nest, and everyone seemed to have at least a bolt action rifle capable of head shots at 100 yards.

The Central California Cities were as Liberal as the day was long, and the ATF didn’t have to

worry about seizing guns, the good little sheeple were turning them in by the dozens, and turning in their neighbors who didn't. Extreme Northern California was just like Extreme Southern California. The people around the Emerald Triangle had a saying "The only good Fed was a dead Fed!" The ATF decided they would be better served concentrating on the Big cities where they were having the most success, and leaving the Conservative Rural areas alone for now.

Phase II had started months ago when thousands of Moslem women started buying larger quantities of various food products. They were delivered to a group of biology and chemistry graduate students in the US on student visas, who inoculated the products with various toxins and poisons. They had hidden their Moslem heritage from the authorities, and since they were from Europe they escaped the first round of deportations. When they had finished inoculating the products, they gave them back to the women, who secretly placed the tampered products back on the shelf. There were only 1 or 2 tampered products per store, but they spread them around as much as possible.

The first clue that something was wrong was the spike in reports of food poisoning to the CDC several weeks later. The CDC immediately suspected food tampering, since it was so widespread, and affected unrelated products. The flare-lit tip off was when they noticed there was no unusual incidents of food poisoning from canned goods. The Media found out when a CDC employee leaked the information to a reporter in exchange for 10 thousand dollars. As usual, the media got it all wrong, blew it way out of proportion, and caused a huge panic in the affected cities.

The only odd thing was that no rural areas, including rural Nevada were affected, then someone realized that if Moslem Terrorists were involved, most rural areas were Lilly white, except for some Mexicans that lived there for a long time. Panicked shoppers in the Big cities started returning all the products they had bought in the last 30 days, including canned goods, which were unaffected.

The terrorists then delivered the coupe de grace to the food supply by poisoning fruits, vegetables, and grain products. When the food ran out, the cities were in chaos with food riots, and general bedlam. 99.9% of the food was perfectly good to eat, it's just that they believed what they saw on TV, and didn't bother investigating whether the media was telling the truth. The Media had stopped telling the truth decades ago when they found out that sensationalism meant viewers, and viewers meant ratings, which meant they got bigger salaries when the manufacturers paid more for their advertising. So Truth was no longer the standard, but Ratings.

President Kerry's response to this was to sign Executive Orders further restricting civil rights, and requiring confiscation of stored food. This of course only made things worse.

Jackie and Darrell realized that the United States was coming apart, and Emperor Kerry was

playing the violin while the country went up in flames. Jackie was wishing that someone would nuke DC and fix the problem, but she wouldn't get that lucky!

The situation in the US was getting to the point where several advisors were urging President Kerry to declare Martial Law and allow the military to get control of the situation, since millions of Americans were dying. They didn't know that this was exactly what Kerry had been hoping for; the US would have to lose 50% of its population in order to fall within UN population guidelines. Kerry was a far greater monster than some of the people who elected him realized. He was raised in France, and secretly despised everything America stood for. He even had to learn to pronounce his wife's name like an American, because he always pronounced Theresa in the European way as "Ter-a-sa" instead of "Ter-ee-sa" this would have been a dead giveaway to anyone looking that he was a European sycophant, and felt Americans were inferior to the Superior European culture. He was perfectly willing to let Americans die in order to bring them into the European Socialist fold. Instead he ordered FEMA and ATF to forcibly redistribute what food was left, stripping the rural areas to feed the cities.

The order went out to all offices as soon as President Kerry signed it, and the next day, Jackie got a very strange and alarming call from Agent Nelson at the ATF.

"Jackie, its Agent Nelson, I can't talk long, but Kerry has ordered FEMA and the ATF to confiscate all food and weapons from the rural areas. I need you to tell the Sheriff and have him pass the word to shoot any ATF or FEMA agents on sight, they won't be mine, because I told my guys to stand down and go underground until this blows over. Bye!"

Jackie nearly panicked by the bad news, and knew she needed to talk to the Sheriff ASAP. Since she knew that they could easily monitor Cellular calls, she called him on the landline and said she had to meet him ASAP and Face to Face. The Sheriff realized that Jackie had an urgent message for him, and said he would be over in 15 minutes since he was in that end of the county. She said to meet him outside the office. 15 minutes later, the Sheriff's personal vehicle drove through the gate like he was being chased by the Devil himself. Jackie had called security, and had them open the gate electronically and disable the anti-vehicle mine. He skidded to a stop in front of the office, and Jackie hopped into his Suburban to give him the bad news.

"I knew that SOB couldn't be trusted! OK, Jackie you guys are officially on RED ALERT! Shoot anything that gets anywhere near you. If it's me or my officers, we'll call first on the telephone, or the radio if the telephones aren't working. If you have the stuff, you might want to make up some defenses for a helicopter attack - that's how the ATF likes to hit a "hard target". Luckily they don't have any heavy weapons, since the National Guard is staying out of it. Can I use Darrell's computer to get the word out?"

"Sure - this way Sheriff!"

He walked into Darrell's Office, and while Jackie gave Darrell the Reader's Digest version of what was going on, the Sheriff logged onto the internet, and sent a seemingly innocuous message to a friend of his, but he deliberately called his granddaughter "Samantha" Sally. The rest of the message was a 1-time pad code. It instructed him to copy and relay the message to a pre-arranged list of local law enforcement, and other people who could be absolutely trusted. As soon as he got off, Darrell sent an e-mail of his own to the Secretary of the Navy. The Secretary had given Darrell a one-time pad to use in the event of an emergency after they had been attacked twice. Darrell outlined the entire scenario, and suggested that the Secretary should do what he wished with the information. When he finished, he super-encrypted the message with his an encryption program he wrote that took the NSA 10 hours of super-computer time to crack, only to find out it was routine message traffic. After sending a few more innocent messages to the Secretary, the operators instructed the computer to ignore traffic from that ISP address. That was their first mistake. Darrell knew that the NSA couldn't waste the computer time decoding routine message traffic, and would eventually tell the computer to ignore it! When the message reached the Secretary, he entered his decrypt key and the current date, but the message was still gibberish. He verified that he entered the correct date, then realized that this message was still encrypted with his one-time pad. He walked over to his personal safe, entered the combination, and extracted a single floppy disk. He stuck it into his computer and pressed <control> <F9>, the message was decrypted automatically, and when he viewed it on his screen, he swore like he hadn't since he was a Captain. "That dirty rotten SOB..." (trust me, it got worse from there)

When he came up for air, he pulled the disk out of his machine, and inserted it into his top-secret shredder, which was designed to convert anything up to a 1/2" wide to confetti. It shredded the disk into minute squares. Since the disk never resided on his computer, he didn't worry about that, then deleted the message, and performed a final scrub to remove all references to the file in his computer, which also removed it from the Internet.

Meanwhile the Sheriff's friend was busy himself - he recognized the coded message, and went to his safe, which was also protected by an explosive fail-safe. If you entered the combination and opened the safe without entering an extra set of digits, a small charge of C-4 blew you and the safe into unrecognizable bits. Reaching into the safe, he extracted a single floppy disk, and inserted it into his computer. He pressed a key sequence, and the message was decrypted. "Son of a B#\$%\$#" was the first comment out of his mouth. He quickly sent a message to another list, and within an hour, thousands of Law Enforcement Officials who stood on the side of Freedom and the Constitution knew that the ATF and FEMA had gone off the reservation. They made phone calls and put plans into motion to stop them.

The Secretary of the Navy maintained a secure comms connection to a very black group of Navy Seals who operated outside either JSOC or Navy control. As far as the Navy was concerned, they didn't exist, and their tasking originated from the Joint Chiefs or the Secretary of the Navy. Their missions were so black that there was no paper trail or other communications with anyone else in the chain of command. The Secretary contacted the team

leader with a one-word message “Reciprocity”. That message told the Team leader all he needed to know, The President himself was now to be considered an Enemy of the Constitution.

Chapter 41

When they had finished in Darrell's office, the Sheriff said he had to get back to the office, he was going to be very busy. He thanked Jackie for telling him, and then jumped into his Suburban and drove away as rapidly as he got there. Good thing he was a Sheriff, or someone would have to arrest him for speeding!

Jackie called Manny, put the compound on Red Alert, and drove over to the Security Bunker to talk to him in person. "Manny, I hope to God that you have some nefarious device in your bag of tricks that can bring down a Blackhawk!"

Manny paled and asked the obvious question "Why for the love of God would you want to bring down a Blackhawk?"

"How about a Blackhawk full of Rogue ATF agents attacking the compound?"

"Why didn't you say so? Let me make a few calls and see what my cousins can come up with."

"Manny, I need it yesterday, for all I know, there's a Blackhawk en route to the compound right now. All the warning he could give me was the President has ordered confiscation of food storage and weapons. I'm sure we're on a list somewhere due to all those purchases from the preparedness stores."

"Madre de Dios Jackie, I'll get right on it!"

Half an hour later, Manny was back with Jackie. "I've got a line on several RPGs that the owner assures us will take down a Blackhawk. It might not blow it out of the sky, but it will definitely make it crash, and will be too damaged to lift off again. He has 4 Russian RPG-7s for sale at \$1,000 each cash."

"Manny, I don't have that kind of cash, ask him if he'd take a check for \$1,200 each."

Manny called his cousin back, and said "OK"

Jackie pulled her checkbook out of her fanny pack, and asked him who to make the check out to. "Jackie, make the check out to me. I told him I'd handle it, and make sure he got paid." Jackie wrote a check out to Manny for \$4800 dollars, and he jumped in his truck and took off. He was back in an hour with 4 Russian RPG-7 anti-tank rockets. Manny knew for a fact the RPG-7 would disable or destroy a Blackhawk since it would defeat about 330mm of armor. Any ATF agents who showed up were in for a rude welcome. As soon as he got back inside the compound, Manny called the Security bunker, and had them activate the electronic gate lock and the anti-vehicle mine. Manny made sure all the RPVs were up and running. There was no

sign of any attempts at surveillance, or any signs of an impending attack. With that information, Manny stood down from Red Alert, and reduced the alert to a Yellow Alert. Manny had used the time since the last attack to rebuild and replace all the explosive devices they had expended in the last attack, and built some new stuff that even Jackie hadn't considered, and mounted disguised day/night cameras on the roof of the storage building. He was sure if anyone attacked the compound in anything but heavy armor, that they wouldn't be leaving in the vehicle they came in. He made some IED's right out of "Anarchist's Cookbook" and some others that the author didn't even know about. The owners of the supply stores in Winnemucca didn't complain or question his purchases, since it was an open secret that they had repelled 2 attacks to their ranch, and Jackie had stopped their attack on the Salt Lake City Temple. Manny had purchased enough high explosives and chemicals to boost a rocket into orbit, albeit a very small rocket! The junkyard had sold them all the small scrap he had in the yard, and he was busy making more since they were his best customers. He owned a vehicle shredder, and had already sold them almost a ton of scrap metal from the shredder.

Since Manny had so many devices available this time, his plan was to keep everyone under cover in the bunker, and use the remote detonated devices to destroy anyone who attacked the compound. He would personally fire the RPG to take down the chopper if necessary, since he was the only one with experience with them.

Jackie got a phone call from the Sheriff, he said she needed to come over to the station ASAP, he had some information for her he couldn't tell her over the phone. Jackie told Manny that the Sheriff needed her at the station to tell her something face to face. Manny said "OK, but go loaded for bear, you never know what might happen now." Jackie made sure her WP Shotgun was under her seat, and her SU-16 was loaded and behind the seat where she had left it. She told Darrell she had to go to the Sheriff's office, and jumped into the truck. Manny disarmed the mine and opened the gate for her just before she got there and closed it behind her. She made it to Interstate 80 fine, but the next time she checked her mirrors, a Black van was cruising up in the left lane with very dark glass and a super-heavy duty push bumper. Jackie noticed several smaller antennas on the roof and made it as a Fedmobile. Her paranoid side kicked in, and she said to herself "Girl - you've been set up!" While the van was too far back to see, she reached under the seat and pulled out her WP shotgun. She knew the weapon would be as devastating as a Subgun at close range. She set it on the seat next to her so she could grab it and shoot if necessary. She didn't think the AFT was dumb enough to try and kidnap her, but then again, she was notorious thanks to surviving 2 attacks using high explosives and blowing that terrorist sky high. Maybe they wanted to become "instant heroes" by capturing her. Knowing what Agent Nelson told her, these were rogue agents operating without authority, at least locally, so if they tried anything, she was legally justified in blowing them away. She continued to drive one handed, with her right hand holding the shotgun. Sure enough, when she looked again, she could see an ATF badge emblazoned on the side of the van. They flipped their lights and sirens on as if they wanted to pull her over, but when she didn't move, the agent driving the van got cocky and decided to force her over. "Bad Move Bozo" Jackie thought to herself, and when the van was along side, but right before they made contact, she pressed the window down

button, and as soon as the window was down, stuck the barrel of the WP shotgun out the window, aiming at the passenger side window. She hoped the rounds would injure the driver enough to crash the van. The recoil was brutal when she pulled the trigger, but she held on, and the van's passenger side glass blew into thousands of fragments, and the remainder of the charge of buckshot divided itself between the passenger and the driver. He lost control of the vehicle and ran straight into a bridge abutment, totaling the van, and hopefully killing everyone inside. She floored the accelerator and headed to the Sheriff's office. Knowing that ATF was probably monitoring the phones, she kept quiet. 10 minutes later, she arrived shaken but unhurt at the Sheriff's station. She ran inside and asked where the hell the Sheriff was. He came out fast, and seeing the look in her eyes, took her outside away from the building, and any nosy bystanders.

"Jackie, what the hell happened, we got a report of an ATF van that was totaled just 10 minutes ago, and you come storming in here - what's going on?"

"Sheriff - the ATF either has your phones bugged, or you have a snitch. That ATF van was meant for me - I'm pretty sure they were going to kidnap me, and if I was lucky, they were just going to make an example of me, and throw me in prison for the rest of my life after a show trial."

"Jackie, I'm pretty sure you're right, since if the ATF was following procedures, they were supposed to notify me. Since I didn't hear anything about this, your guess is probably right, and they were not authorized by anyone but Washington!"

"Sheriff, I have to call the ranch right now and warn them!" She grabbed her cell phone, and realized it was worth the risk, since the bug was probably on the Sheriff's land line, and cell phones were harder to bug.

She called Manny and gave him the Reader's Digest version of what happened. He hit the air raid siren, and 5 minutes everyone was inside the security bunker except Jackie.

"Sheriff, I need to get back home. Can you give me a Police escort in case they have another trap waiting for me?"

Sure, I'll go with you, give me a second to get a couple of items first."

He ran back inside the building, and came out 5 minutes later wearing body armor and carrying an AR-15. Jackie knew he was serious.

"Jackie, follow Me - I'm going Code 3 and the Speed of Heat! Blink your headlights if you can't keep up, and I'll slow down."

"If you keep it under 100, I can pretty much keep up, except for the turns - I need to slow down

or risk a roll-over with this top-heavy truck!”

With that, the Sheriff got in his Suburban, and Jackie got back into her truck. She cycled the action to put a fresh round in the chamber while she was backing up. As soon as they were on the main road and she was following him, he went Code 3 and floored it. Jackie tried to keep up, and flicked her lights when he got too far ahead. As he slowed down, she caught up, and he accelerated to keep ahead of her. Luckily the traffic was light, and they got out of the way fast. Several drivers were confused by the big truck following so closely behind the Sheriff’s personal vehicle. They took the onramp to I-80 as fast as they could, and accelerated to over 100 mph as they rocketed past the accident site. NHP had a trooper and a wrecker at the site, but they paid no attention to the Sheriff going the other way Code 3. When they got close to the ranch, Jackie called on the radio, and they opened the gate just in time for them to go blowing through it. They both skidded to a stop right in front of the Security building. The Sheriff made sure Jackie was safely inside before turning around and charging back to the accident site. He was a very angry Sheriff, and he wanted answers!

When he reached the accident site, the NHP was still processing the accident site. They had taken 6 mangled bodies out of the wreck, but their ATF IDs were still intact. The Sheriff demanded and got a list of the ID’s and the names of the agents. When he was satisfied that he had all the info he needed, he jumped in his Suburban and drove to the closest pay phone. Extracting an unused phone card, he dialed a number on the back of a card he kept in his wallet.

“Governor’s Office, this is Governor Guinn.”

“Governor, this is Sheriff Hunt from Humboldt County - I’ve got an emergency I need to talk to you about right now! A bunch of rogue ATF agents attacked Jackie Hayes with intent to kidnap her, and she had to use deadly force to defend herself. Yeah, that Jackie Hayes! As we speak, the NHP is working a multiple fatality accident site less than 5 miles south of Winnemucca. I was given assurances by Agent Nelson that any ATF activity in this county was unauthorized, and I was never notified there was an ATF team in my county. I’d like to know what the Hell is going on, and what you intend to do about it!”

“Sheriff Hunt, do you have the names of the agents?”

“I’ve got a list of their names and badge numbers right here” The Sheriff quickly dictated the list to the Governor. Since the conversation was taped, he didn’t have to write it down.

“Sheriff, you do whatever you have to do to defend the citizens of your county. I’m authorizing the use of deadly force without warning if you locate any other ATF or FEMA agents in your county - no need to attempt to arrest. YOU DO understand this is a direct order to shoot on sight!”

“Yes Governor, any rogue ATF or FEMA agents will be dealt with extreme prejudice!

“I’ll get back to you ASAP - I’m going to get to the bottom of this!”

The Governor hung up, and called Agent Nelson at the ATF. When he answered the phone, the Governor asked him several blunt questions. His answers indicated that he had no knowledge of any authorized operations anywhere in Nevada, let alone Humboldt County. He agreed with the Governor’s “Shoot on Sight” orders. The Governor thanked Agent Nelson, and decided to call the Governor of Utah.

“Governor Davis, this is Governor Guinn in Nevada. Evidently that SOB in DC has dispatched rogue ATF and FEMA agents to Nevada and Utah. The lady that saved the Temple was just attacked by ATF agents intent on kidnapping her. In the process of defending herself, she wrecked the van and killed all the agents inside. According to Agent Nelson, he had no knowledge of any ATF activity in Nevada, nor had he authorized any activity. It seems that SOB in DC has turned into a Dictator!

“Governor Guinn - thanks for telling me! How about a Joint news conference? We can set it up so we can link your office in Carson City with mine in Salt Lake. I’ll let you break the news since it occurred in Nevada, then we will issue a joint statement condemning the illegal ATF activity, and telling Mr. Kerry that any further ATF or FEMA activities in either of our states will be met with deadly force!”

“Governor Davis, I like how you think. How about 6:00 Mountain time to make the live broadcast in Utah’s prime time slot!”

“Excellent, I’ll have my aide call your aide to set it up.”

Later that evening, at 6:00pm Mountain Time, the major local networks interrupted their programming for a joint telecast from the Governor’s offices in Carson City and Salt Lake City. The picture showed Governor Guinn seated at his desk with a Gadsden flag and a Nevada State flag, but NO US flag flying behind him.

“Ladies and Gentlemen, this afternoon, the ATF made an illegal and unauthorized attack aimed at kidnapping a citizen of Nevada, whose only crime was to use deadly force to defend herself against 2 terrorist attacks against her ranch, and to destroy a moving van loaded with high explosives aimed at the Mormon Temple in Salt Lake City. Evidently, President Kerry believes that self-defense, and the defense of innocent people is worthy of attempted murder, and execution without benefit of Judge or Jury. I have received assurances from the local ATF director that there were no authorized ATF operations anywhere in Nevada. I have also received word that rogue ATF and FEMA agents, acting under unconstitutional secret orders of the White House have been ordered to seize food and weapons from the Rural areas of the United States for re-distribution to the cities. The cities are experiencing levels of rioting never seen before, and the National Guard forces are unable to do more than keep it from spreading. To say that they could bring food into those areas is laughable under these conditions. What we

have is a Power Mad President assuming dictatorial powers in order to push forward a hidden agenda, because none of his recent actions have done anything to reduce the rioting or loss of life in the cities. We now switch to Governor Davis in Salt Lake City.”

“Thank you Governor Guinn. We are furious at the attacks of rogue ATF and FEMA agents against law-abiding citizens of Nevada. I join Governor Guinn in demanding the end of these unauthorized, illegal activities, and authorize any Utah law enforcement, National Guard, or Citizen Militias to use any force necessary to protect themselves from these illegal attacks. We hereby jointly order all Federal Law Enforcement to depart Utah and Nevada under pain of arrest. We neither need nor want your help! Any attempt to send Federal Military forces to enforce any unconstitutional order will be met by deadly force. President Kerry, this is your only and final warning! Leave Nevada and Utah alone, or face the consequences.” Both Governor Guinn and Governor Davis said “goodnight” before any questions could be asked or answered.

15 minutes later, Governor Guinn’s private line rang. It was Agents Nelson of the ATF and Agent Williams of the FBI.

“Governor Guinn, we heard your news conference, and would like to stay in Nevada, as would our agents. Is there anything you can do?”

“What would you gentlemen suggest - it seems President Kerry has a bunch of rogue agents running around, and I don’t want you to get caught in the crossfire.”

“Would you be willing to make us State Agents for the duration of the Emergency, I’m sure the State of Nevada could use as many Pro-Freedom, Pro-Constitution law enforcement agents as possible.”

“How about a swearing in ceremony at noon tomorrow? I don’t know if your current boss in DC will let you stay in the buildings you are currently occupying.”

“Governor, we’ve both reached the ends of our ropes dealing with these PC idiots. We have over 500 trained agents willing to become agents of the State of Nevada, if you can afford to pay us. I wouldn’t care if I was operating out a Quonset Hut as long as I can still catch the bad guys!”

“OK, both of you report over here at 10:00 tomorrow morning, and then we can do the swearing-in ceremony at noon. I’ll have to think fast about what to do for badges and vehicles. If you could bring your weapons and gear with you except the vehicles, it would be a big help. I doubt you’d want to be caught dead in a fedmobile about now - excuse the bad pun!”

“That’s Ok Governor, the way most Nevadans are feeling right now - caught DEAD was exactly what we were thinking! Could you send the Washoe County Sheriff and some vans over to the

Federal Building tomorrow to transport us over to Carson City?”

“Ok, see you at 10:00 tomorrow!”

Chapter 42

The Secretary had set up a totally black organization to take care of problems that no one else could for various reasons. After the NIS investigation and imprisonment of Richard Marcinko after stepping on one too many Admirals' toes, he knew the only way he could get stuff done was to set up an organization totally outside of the Defense Department. When one of the up and coming Seal officers was given the choice to quit the Navy or face 20 years in prison after beating a senior officer to a bloody pulp after he blew a mission with his carelessness, costing several SEAL lives, the Secretary knew he might have the nucleus of his team. Captain Evans was the CO of a SEAL team, and had been a very good one. The Secretary met Captain Evans clandestinely and offered him a dream job. He could form his own team, and would only answer to the Secretary and Joint Chiefs. On the down side, he would receive no support from Military channels, but that also had its good side, since he didn't have to justify every dime he spent. The Secretary gave him 2 things when they were finished. 1) An untraceable encrypted Sat phone that connected to his laptop and 2) The account number to a Bahamian offshore account that had \$10 Million dollars in it, money the US government had seized from Terrorist financiers. He was to take care of paying and training his own people, but they would all have to quit the Navy or US Gov't employment and go underground using assumed identities and false passports.

Captain Evans knew this was his dream come true, and jumped at the chance. 2 weeks later, he assembled his team. None of the team members ranked lower than Chief when they suddenly retired from the Navy and disappeared. None of them fit into the New Politically Correct Navy, and that was exactly what Captain Evans was looking for - unconventional Warriors. They were taken from all rates, but they were all Ex-SEALS who could jump, dive, and fight with the best of them. He set up a front business in Brownsville Texas as an Oil Exploration company, which explained the Civilian version of the Huey Chopper parked out front. He had developed contacts through his SEAL career that dealt in black-market weapons and gear, and he bought everything they would ever need for a mission anywhere in the world, and stored it in bunkers on the company property. Most of their gear purchases were easy to explain as exploratory gear, including all their dive gear. They had managed to locate enough legitimate contracts to pay the bills and keep them trained without touching hardly any of the slush fund, except for equipment purchases. Over the years, they had successfully completed several tough assignments for the Secretary, and he knew they could accomplish any mission he assigned them. Captain Evans would ordinarily be reticent to assassinate a sitting US President, but in this case he felt he could make an exception. After several weeks of research and very careful surveillance, he determined the best way to assassinate the security-conscious Kerry was to destroy his limousine while it was in the motorcade. The Presidential Limousine was the toughest vehicle in existence, but he thought he could find a way, and got on the Internet to do some research. Several hours later, he had a weapon, and a perfect idea to throw the Secret Service off their tails. He called his team together to start the planning phase of the mission.

At 10:00 the next morning, Agents Williams and Nelson met Governor Kerry at the Nevada state capitol building in Carson City, NV. After a brief discussion, it was agreed that the entire 500 man group would be sworn in as Special Agents of the State of Nevada, with duties similar to what they were doing before, with the exception of the ATF. The Governor had an idea to use their investigative talents in an Anti-Terrorism group that would investigate, and prevent any further terrorist attacks in Nevada. This overlapped the FBI's old turf, so he told both agents they would have to work together. At 12:00 noon exactly, they met in the rotunda for the mass swearing in ceremony. Agents Williams and Nelson were in the foreground in front of their troops, with Governor Guinn administering the oath as the cameras rolled.

"Do you swear to uphold the Constitution and laws of the State of Nevada, and perform the duties to which you are assigned to the best of your ability, So help you God?"

When the 500 men and women assembled replied in the affirmative, several conservative members of the State Legislature were on hand to clap and cheer.

"Gentlemen, you have freely entered into service of the State of Nevada as Special Agents. Thank you, Good Luck, and Godspeed!" Governor Guinn stepped down from the podium before any of the assembled reporters could ask a question. After a round of congratulatory handshakes and backslaps, the Governor's aide came into the room with a clipboard.

"Gentlemen, here are your assignments and duty locations. For now, you are going to be stationed in an unused State building. We have taken possession of a fleet of vehicles from a local dealership who has agreed to sell the vehicles to the state at cost. They're nothing fancy, but they beat walking. We're arranging radio gear as we speak. If you board the busses, they will drop you off at your new location. Unfortunately it's been abandoned for a few years, and you'll have to clean it up before you can get anything else done. We'll have to give you surplus furniture out of storage. I'm sorry but the digs won't be as nice as you're used to."

Agent Nelson spoke for the group, "We're not too worried about where we are, or what we have to work with, we just want to do our jobs, and are grateful to the Governor for not tossing us out of the state as he threatened yesterday!" With that out of the way, they boarded the busses for the quick trip to their new offices. The aide wasn't kidding; the building was a mess, but structurally sound. Luckily it hadn't been taken over by homeless people and vandalized, so all it needed was a good cleaning.

Two hours later, President Kerry viewed a tape of the swearing-in ceremony, and it was his turn to swear! He called in his Attorney General for an explanation.

"OK, tell me how this happened! I've got two rogue states, and now the ATF and FBI have switched sides in Nevada and Utah on national Television!"

"Mr. President, unfortunately there isn't a thing we can legally do about it, they quit federal

employment and the Governors of their respective states hired them as Special Agents.”

“OK, how about Illegally?”

“Mr. President, you saw the news conference from the last time we went outside the law - imagine the consequences if the media got wind of any illegal activity against a former Federal Law Enforcement officer - everyone we need right now would quit on the spot, and where would you be?”

“Right - but it still doesn’t make me happy - Damn them to Hell!”

President Kerry reached into his desk, and grabbed a flask that was hidden there, and took a belt of whiskey. The Attorney General was shocked at the President’s behavior, and fled the Oval Office.

Back at the ranch, things had settled down, and Manny resumed the Yellow Alert the next morning. Evidently the attack on Jackie was a solo rogue operation, and not the start of a major offensive from the ATF. Manny guessed it was because they were so rural and isolated, and the ATF and FEMA were concentrating on the major cities. Manny doubted that they would need the RPG’s that he had bought, but now that he had them, he never knew when he might need them, so he kept them handy. Jackie was out of a job as far as the ATF and FBI were concerned, but she didn’t want to leave the ranch right now either. She prayed that someone was working on a way to get rid of Kerry one way or the other.

Meanwhile, things were heating up in the Southeastern section of Europe, in the Moslem countries that used to belong to the former Soviet Union. Unrest was increasing, and several Russian officials had already been the victims of attacks. Vladimir Putin wisely withheld from a massive response, instead deciding to defend Russia when the time came. That didn’t mean he wasn’t doing anything. The department of State Security was busy building a list of names of radical Muslim clerics who were likely to be behind the recent uprisings. Premier Putin decided to send in Spetznas hit teams to eliminate the radical clerics, and then take out anyone who rose up to replace them. He was about ready to just nuke the entire region and take his lumps, except he didn’t have enough neutron devices. Despite CIA estimates that 1/3 of the Soviet arsenal was composed of Neutron devices, actually 1/6 or less of their current inventory was composed of enhanced radiation, or Neutron devices, and he didn’t have enough “clean” bombs to do the job. Too bad George Bush had resigned; maybe he could have borrowed a few warheads from the United States?

Chapter 43

The Ministry of State Security took several weeks to make the list - they didn't have the manpower they once had when they were the feared and loathed KGB, when the mere mention of their department sent apprehensive shivers down any Soviet Citizen's spine. Finally they had the list, and forwarded it to Premier Putin's office. He called and got a list of Spetznas Commanders who had seen action in these areas before. He wanted company commanders who were familiar with the area, and might be able to blend in. A White Russian would stand out like a sore thumb, but the Spetznas had successfully recruited men from that area, who owed no allegiance to the Mullahs. He ordered his Head of Security to contact the prospective commanders covertly, and arrange a meeting to brief them on their assignment. Vladimir Putin stressed the need for airtight security on this mission. Any leaks could result in the very uprising they were trying to forestall.

Back in the United States, things were going from bad to worse. The Food Riots were in their third week, and the Sheriff had warned the Ranchers to expect attacks or refugees any week now. He thought that hungry people might get wise and go to where the food was, and shortcut the system. Manny was way ahead of the Sheriff, and had the RPVs flying 24/7 since the original attacks, since no one knew whether the Muslim Terrorists had anything left up their sleeves. Anyone approaching the ranch unarmed and solo, or in a small group would be detained and transferred to the Sheriff's custody. Anyone foolhardy enough to attempt to attack the ranch and steal what they had would get buried next to the terrorists.

Even cities like Reno and Salt Lake were running out of food. It wasn't that there wasn't any food; it was that no one had pulled their head out and realized that the canned goods were perfectly good to eat, since it was almost impossible to tamper with them. Since Salt Lake was mostly Mormon, no one starved since they had ample storage of food to last for the next 6-12 months. Las Vegas was a disaster area, and getting worse by the day. Most of the population was transient, and dependent on the casinos for their livelihood, and on stores that only stocked 2-3 days worth of food for their foodstuffs. The few people who were prepared had battened down the hatches tight to prepare for looters and raiders, and weren't in a mood to share, since the rumor that you had food was enough to get you killed in the chaos of the day. What people that could left, but they had no where to go. California was just as bad or worse, and everyone North of them had gone to ground, and were defending their homes with deadly force. Someone got the bright idea to try and go fishing in the Colorado river. There were several problems with that. 1) the untreated water was unfit to drink, and gave people various bugs that made them sick, which further polluted the water. 2) After decades of unrestricted fishing, there weren't much fish left, and the few that were left were either in deep water where they couldn't get caught, or were hauled out with nets during the first week. There were plenty of ground squirrels and rabbits surrounding the area, but they were carriers of Bubonic Plague, and several hundred people were affected. Several people resorted to catching and killing stray cats and dogs, and then people's pets when that ran out. Pigeons that used to congregate around the

casinos disappeared in the first weeks.

The next day, Manny saw a couple of unfamiliar broken-down pickup trucks towing trailers headed up the ranch road from the freeway. He zoomed in to magnify the image, and they appeared to be several Mexican families, but he didn't recognize them. He got on the radio, and called the other ranches. They told him they weren't expecting anyone. Finally the lead truck reached their gate, and an older man got out of the driver's seat, stood up and waved, then set his old Winchester 97 on the hood. Manny zoomed in on the face, then called to Maria, and asked her to come to the Security bunker. She left the children with the older boys and drove over. She took one look at the screen and started crying. "Manny, it's my Brother Arturo from Los Angeles - I don't know how they made it this far."

Manny and Maria jumped in their truck and drove to the gate. Manny had disabled the anti-vehicle mine, but left the gate locked until he was sure. When they got closer, Maria barely waited until the truck was stopped and she bolted out the door to embrace her brother. Manny opened a cover, and tapped a code into the electronic lock, and the gate opened by itself. Then he walked over and embraced his brother-in-law.

"Arturo, glad you could make it! How did you manage to travel all the way from East Los Angeles out here?"

"It wasn't easy, but when the trouble started, Mary and I started praying, and we were reminded that you and Maria lived out here, and we hoped you could put us up for a while."

"I'll have to ask the boss. Who all did you bring?"

"Well there's Mary and our 4 kids, Oscar and Rosie and their 3, and then there's Maria's sisters Mercedes and Angela."

"Did you bring anything with you?"

"We've got enough food to last another month, tents, sleeping bags, cots, and several propane stoves and some propane, plus clothes and toiletries. We can stay in the tents if you can put us up. We just needed some place safe to stay for the duration."

Manny made a couple of quick phone calls, and they decided to let them in, how long they stayed depended on whether they wanted to work or freeloader off Manny and Maria. Manny escorted them into the Ranch, and they were amazed at the size of it. When they had parked in front of Manny's house, Arturo took Manny aside. "Manny, I know we are probably going to be an inconvenience, but we do not want to freeloader off you. It looks like you have several projects around here that you could use our help for - even if you

want us to farm and pick vegetables. You know I used to pick lettuce for several years until I got my citizenship papers and could get a real job. We're not too proud to do anything around here that needs doing."

"Arturo, it's too early to say anything right now, why don't you get the kids settled in our house for now, and let's go meet the boss."

Arturo, Mary, Oscar, and Rosie got their kids settled with Manny's kids, then Mercedes and Angela joined them, and drove over to the office. Jackie had given Darrell a heads-up, and all the board members were waiting in the conference room.

Manny introduced everyone, and there was an uneasy couple of minutes until Arturo decided to speak.

"Mr. Hayes, we're grateful you decided to let us in. We're willing to work hard while we're here, and we don't want to be an imposition on you. We've all done manual labor before, and are willing to do whatever you ask us to."

Manny spoke next, "Mr. Hayes, I think they might be able to help around here with the farm, and I wanted to raise chickens and worms, now with the extra help, it would be easier to do." While Manny spoke, the recently divorced board members were making eye contact with Mercedes and Angela, both were stunningly beautiful, single and in their early 30's. The looks Mercedes and Angela gave them told them the feeling was mutual. In some ways, they were just like their ex-wives, but more practical. If they had to marry, might as well be a rich gringo. Their kids would be citizens, and they would be well cared for. From the looks they were giving the two board members, they were willing to do just about anything to accomplish that. Jackie took that moment to look at the two women, and realized what was going on. She kept her peace, since they were all adults, and the guys were lonely since their divorce. Manny was persuasive, and the two board members figured it was a package deal - the two Hotties came with their families. They voted unanimously to let them stay indefinitely.

After the meeting broke up, the two board members got to talk to the women, and were pleasantly surprised that they spoke fluent English, had green cards so they were here legally, and were currently single. They spent the rest of the afternoon getting to know each other, and both women accepted the offers of the Board members to move into their place. They claimed they needed maids, and had spare bedrooms, but neither woman really expected to do much sleeping in a separate bed. Maria was too busy arranging things to notice, and her two sisters managed to avoid her for a couple of weeks. Jackie called a couple of places, and found some used trailers that would be more comfortable than sleeping in tents, and arranged to have them delivered and set up. They would share a septic system, and the water connections would be easy since they were right in back of Manny's house, but far enough away for privacy. Arturo and Oscar were hard working,

and within a week, they had the chicken coops and worm farm up and running. Jackie had located a local chicken grower with some older chicks and several older laying hens that were still producing eggs. The feed store in town had tons of chicken feed, since it wasn't fit for human consumption, and they bought a truckload and a container to store it in. When the worm farm started producing, they could add the worm bodies to the feed for extra protein. Manny had noticed the absence of Mercedes and Angela, and mentioned it to Maria. She had a pretty good idea what her sisters were up to, and basically read them the riot act!

“You two aren't going to act like a couple of P*tas while I'm here! Either marry the men you're sleeping with, or hit the road, since you aren't contributing to anything around here!”

Mercedes knew her older sister was serious, so they talked to the two guys, who agreed to marry them as long as they signed a pre-nuptial agreement. They explained it was to protect their substantial assets. If they didn't fool around on them, or spend money like water, everything was ok. This was just in case they got divorced. They told their perspective wives what had happened the last time. Mercedes and Angela told the guys they wanted to settle down and raise a family. They weren't into fancy clothes and stuff anyway, and didn't want or need a maid. They were perfectly content to be housewives and raise the kids. When the guys asked them why they didn't marry someone from East LA, they both admitted they wanted to marry an American Citizen who was well-off enough to make sure the kids were taken care of, and could provide for their future. Bill told Mercedes he appreciated her honesty, and asked her if she really loved him. She said she did. At first, they were hoping just to bag a rich husband, but they were so sweet and loving to them that they both fell in love with them. Angela told Sam basically the same thing. The next day Bill and Sam both proposed to their fiancés, and the day after, they signed pre-nuptial contracts that Jim had drawn up. They were given \$100,000.00 each in the event of divorce, and \$30,000 per child in child support if there were any children. They both had a penalty clause for contesting the divorce.

Two weeks later, they were married by the Justice of the Peace in Winnemucca. They had the reception at the Red Lion Casino in Winnemucca. 9 months later, Mercedes and Angela were pregnant with their first of what they hoped were many more children.

After the weddings, Jackie realized she needed 6 more AR-15s and 6 Para Ord P-14's with magazines, vests, holsters, and mag carriers. She had some trouble locating them due to the unrest until she checked at the local gun dealer she had bought the WP Shotguns from. He admitted that he had everything in stock, and would sell her 6 Para-Ord P-14's with 18 magazines, 6 AR-15s with C-more sights, 60 20 round magazines, and 6 Blackhawk Level IIa vests with chicken plates for 20% over his cost. Since he already had a copy of their LEO letter on file, she could come right down and pick them up. Manny agreed to go with her and ride shotgun. In his case, that was exactly what he

did. They drove down to the gun dealer's store with Jackie's WP shotgun on Manny's lap. She filled out the paperwork, they loaded the truck, and drove home "Muy Rápido" as Manny said later. Jackie made up 6 kits, and Manny held weapons practice the next day. The new arrivals were stunned by the kits Jackie gave them, until she explained that they were just on loan as long as they lived or worked there as the case may be. Mercedes and Angela had virtually no weapons experience, but Arturo and Oscar were ex-Marines just like Manny. Their wives were between them and Mercedes in weapons familiarity and skills. Jackie and Manny could see they had their work cut out for them. Jackie took the ladies over to the pistol range, and quickly got Mary and Rosie up to speed. Mercedes and Angela were a bit harder to convince until Susan came up behind them and explained the "facts of life" to them. After that, they quickly got with the program.

Later that day, Jackie e-mailed the Sheriff with requests for new CCW's for the 6 people. Within a week, all 4 women were shooting good enough to safely carry concealed, and did so whenever they went off the ranch. Meanwhile, Manny was having fun with his Brother-in-laws with the AR-15 on the shooting range. Both had qualified in the Marines, but that was almost 20 years ago. Arturo was the better shot of the two, but they both needed some help getting up to speed with the C-more optics, until Manny told them to put the dot on the target and pull the trigger. They started scoring hits as soon as they trusted the optics. Later that week, they switched, and Jackie found out Arturo was a really good shot with the .45. He said that he used to own a Colt Commander when he lived in East LA, since you didn't go anywhere unarmed in that barrio

Chapter 44

Things in the former Soviet Union were heating up fast. With the major setbacks in their plans to conquer the United States, the Revolutionary Council decided to turn up the heat in the Moslem countries to the south of Russia, and foment a revolution there that would hopefully turn into a full-blown Jihad and sweep into Russia. The Spetznas commanders assembled their teams, and made plans to assassinate the mullahs leading the revolution, and make it look like a hit by an opposing mullah, which would eliminate the troublemakers, and start a Civil War in the provinces, which would detract and stall any attempts at Revolution, since they would be too busy fighting each other to pay attention to Russia. Also, if they took each other out, that would be that fewer Mullahs the Spetznas would have to take out! Since everyone in the area owned AK-47s and RPG's they would use the same weapons and cause even more confusion, since they wouldn't know they were under attack, or if someone was just celebrating a wedding until they started dying, and by then it would be too late. That gave the commanders an inspiration - they needed to find out if any weddings were scheduled in the areas so they could use the celebratory gunfire as auditory cover for their assault. Several days later they got the answer they hoped for, the Mayor's daughter was getting married in a little over a week. While it was pretty soon for planning purposes, it was perfect cover, since there would be tons of celebratory firing and other noises. They had the homes of the Mullahs already identified. This would be your basic shoot and scoot, fire a couple of RPGs through the door, and shoot any survivors, then boogie! They would be wearing locally made clothes including scarves to cover their faces as they assaulted the house. The commanders sent people into the towns to buy the clothes locally, then the rest of the teams followed 2 days later, to meet at a pre-determined location for final planning and a weapons check.

2 days later, they met in an abandoned farmhouse, and they changed into locally bought clothes with no other IDs on them, then cleaned and tested their weapons, and loaded 5 30-round magazines for them. They had 6 6-man strike teams to get all the troublemakers at once. Each team had 3 RPGs, they would only need 1 or 2, and the 3rd one was for reserve. Each of the teams would be responsible for their own return back to Russia, and they were under orders not to be captured or identified. They each had a suicide pill and several grenades to guarantee their vehicle or bodies would not be recognizable in the event of capture. The night of the wedding, they made their way carefully into the neighborhoods surrounding the Mullahs' houses. The mullahs' security was practically non-existent, and they were able to easily get inside RPG range of the houses. They were all in place before they needed to. The signal to begin the attack would be a long burst of AK fire from the wedding. As soon as the firing started at the wedding, 6 RPGs blew the doors off the houses, and wrecked anything inside. The Spetznas teams stormed the houses, shooting everyone inside. They were in and out in 2 minutes, and driving as quickly as they could to get out of the area. The next day, the local papers' headlines finished the job the Spetznas commandos started when they

theorized that rival Muslim organizations had taken out the Mullahs. Their denials fell on deaf ears, and the civil war began in earnest!

Premier Putin read the translation of the local papers with great satisfaction. The revolution had been adverted, but the people who wanted to start it were still at large. He didn't believe 6 local mullahs could plan and coordinate an attack of that magnitude, and they had to have outside help. He spoke to the Director of State Security, and told him to make finding the people behind these attacks and eliminating them his highest priority.

The SEAL team had been busy in the last weeks, planning the assassination of a US President was never easy, but the Secret Service had a hard job. They would love nothing better than the President remain at the White house and never go out in public, because when he went out in public, he was vulnerable. The SEALs had the same information as the Secret Service did, but from a different viewpoint - their mission objectives sometimes included assassination of heads of state, or at least major drug lords, who took their security much more seriously than the average Politician, who craved attention and adulation. Even this President craved the limelight, and there was an ongoing battle between his Chief of Staff, and the Head of the Secret Service, and sometimes the Secret Service lost the argument. An upcoming trip to Philadelphia was a case in point, he wanted to motorcade down through downtown Philadelphia, and the Secret Service wanted him to fly Marine 1 from the airport to a landing on the helipad atop the convention center where he was giving a speech. In the end, the President won out, and they allowed the Motorcade. The very reason the Secret Service didn't want the motorcade was the exact reason Captain Evans knew it would be the ideal spot for an ambush with an anti-tank missile. There were too many multi-story skyscrapers along the motorcade route to cover them all. He knew exactly which building he wanted to use, it wasn't the ideal setup, the angle wasn't perfect, and it was far enough away to need the extra range of the Chinese anti-tank missile. Their final planning would involve a ground eyes-on examination of the building. Captain Evans realized another problem when he got there, the shooting spot didn't have enough of a view to know when the motorcade was coming. He'd have to use another operator with a low-power laser aimed at the building to indicate when the motorcade was in range. The laser would be pre-aimed on the exact window, and when the Motorcade was 30 seconds from the ambush point, he would turn the laser on, and that would begin a 30-second countdown until when the missile should be fired. While they were doing the final mission planning, he had a brainstorm, and sent one of the SEALs off to purchase some Islamic Prayer rugs.

3 days later, he had all the mission equipment necessary. Part of the mission was even more difficult than the assassination. He needed to procure a Chinese HJ-8E anti-tank missile, but it needed to be from a French source, preferably one with Moslem connections, and he had to have at least 3 cut-outs to disguise the true purchaser. The HJ-8E had a range of over 4 kilometers, and could punch through over 100mm of armor. It also had a dual warhead to defeat reactive armor. It was the equivalent of the TOW

missile, but with greater range, and a higher hit probability, and a slightly bigger warhead. Finally he located a French arms dealer who had connections to various Moslem Terrorist organizations. Using several cutouts, he purchased the missile for \$20,000 cash. The SEAL had also located Moslem prayer rugs, and would use them to further throw the Secret Service off their trail, and onto a false trail. He checked the direction to Saudi Arabia from Philadelphia, and added it to the mission profile. Before shooting, they would set up the rugs and kneel on them to leave impressions in the carpet of the fibers from the rugs. They'd wear gloves to deny the Secret Service any prints, and not eat, drink or smoke to deny them any more data other than what they wanted the SS to know.

As the date of the speech approached, they drove to Philadelphia, rented a room, and got set up. Since cutting the glass would be too slow and noisy, they decided to use a ribbon charge to destroy the window right before firing using European Semtex to further confuse the SS. Since it was a Sunday, no one was in either the building, or the building the accomplice used to indicate when the target was in sight. They were well back of the windows in the shadows, and dressed in black so the Secret Service snipers on the roof couldn't see them. When it came time for the Moslem daily prayer, they both kneeled down on the mats, but instead of praying, visualized the funeral pyre of the country's most Liberal president to date. 5 minutes before he thought the Motorcade would arrive, they got the "30 second" signal. Captain Evans shouldered the Missile which was designed to be fired off a tripod, but not at the depressed angle of elevation that they were shooting at, so he had to shoot off his shoulder using a specially made brace which included 2 extra long bipod legs. As soon as Captain Evans saw the lead car of the procession, he nodded to his second in command, who flicked a switch and destroyed the window amazingly quietly. He stood up, and aimed at the Presidential limo. He flipped a safety cage, and pressed the trigger. The missile left the tube with a loud Whoosh, and he concentrated on keeping the image of the Presidential Limousine centered in the 12x sight. 3 seconds later, it impacted right in the center of the roof of the Limousine, fireballing the limousine in a huge explosion that rose 40 feet in the air. Captain Evans dropped the missile tube, grabbed the prayer rugs, and they both hastily exited the building. Instead of using the elevator, they Rappelled down the backside of the building, and were on the ground 10 seconds later, and aboard 2 Kawasaki KZ-1000's a few seconds later. They were over 5 miles away from the site before the Secret Service knew for sure what had happened. The rest of the team had sanitized the room they stayed in, and as soon as the Captain got back, they loaded the bikes and drove back to Texas. They were outside the widest possible cordon 15 minutes before they went up, so they were free and clear. They pulled into a shopping complex, and dropped all their clothing into 6 different dumpsters. The trash was picked up Sunday afternoon, so there was minimal risk disposing of the clothing like that.

Chapter 45

2 hours later Vice President Edwards became President Edwards, and he moved to quickly restore order and confidence in the United States. In a bold move, he went to a Maryland supermarket, bought various foodstuffs, and ate them for dinner as the network cameras recorded everything. When he finished eating, he said “The USA has been the victim of a psych-ops terrorist attack. They contaminated just enough foodstuffs to make us think the entire food supply was contaminated, when maybe 1000 actual items had been tampered with.” He assured the American people that the food supply was safe, and various steps had been taken to prevent it happening again. This wasn’t the total truth, but he rationalized that it was for the good of the country. As soon as the National Guard troops got control of the rioting, fresh food supplies were brought in. President Edwards rescinded all of President Kerry’s Executive Orders, fired all Kerry’s cabinet officers, and sent Congress a list of moderates who were also professionals outside of politics. Jackie was watching the network news, and approved of all the things Edwards was doing to end the abuses Kerry had done. It would take the nation a while to get back on its feet. Edwards ordered an investigation into Kerry’s death, and once the evidence pointed to European Moslem Terrorists, he knew all he needed to know. He would bide his time, but Europe was about to reap the whirlwind.

The Revolutionary Council met again at the same café over the objections of the Security Chief, who felt it was unwise to keep meeting in the same spot. During the meeting, one of the council members answered a cellular phone call. As soon as the security chief noticed, he made him hang up, but the damage was done. The NSA and MI-5’s computers both logged the call, the location, and a brief recording. That piece of data would later be significant, but was overlooked for now, since it wasn’t a priority. The Security Chief was beside himself, not only could these yo-yos NOT run a revolution, they had stupidly revealed their location to several security agencies, and possibly said enough to make a voiceprint ID of the caller and the Mullah. He decided what that the next attack would be, and where they would attack. After almost half a day of bickering, they agreed, and he set the next phase of his plan in motion.

President Edwards had been paying attention while Ex-President Kerry was destroying the nation. He put in a phone call to Governor Guinn of Nevada and had a long conversation with him. The result of that conversation was a disbanding of the BLM, the return of all Federal Land to Nevada that wasn’t needed for Military bases. In return, Nevada agreed to stop all secessionist activities and re-join the Union. President Edwards was impressed by Agents Nelson and Williams. They had stood their moral ground while all kinds of Federal Officers around them were basically spitting on the Constitution. He asked Gov. Guinn if he would mind losing them as State Agents, he was interested in interviewing the two for Directorships of the New and Improved ATF and FBI. Gov. Guinn said as long as they would uphold the Original Intent of the Constitution, he would

have no problems with that. President Edwards promised Gov. Guinn that as long as he was President, there would never be another Jack Booted Thug in Federal employment. Gov. Guinn asked President Edwards if he could call a Press Conference, or if President Edwards would rather make the announcements. President Edwards said that he wanted to make all the announcements at once, including the appointments of Agents Nelson and Williams to Directorships. Gov. Guinn agreed, and thanked the President.

President Edwards next called Governor Davis in Utah. He had the same basic conversation with him as Governor Guinn. Governor Davis was seriously pleased by the news, and agreed to stop all secessionist activities and re-join the Union. With that out of the way, President Edwards sent a VIP jet to Reno to pick up his new directors. He interviewed them the next day and laid out his plans for a revamped and Pro-Constitutional FBI and ATF. The ATF would concentrate on stopping illegal weapons smuggling and sales to violent felons. The states themselves would take care of any other weapons law enforcement and prosecutions. He told Director Nelson that he could regulate, but not harass FFLs who were doing legitimate business, and must have hard evidence of smuggling activities or massive sales of weapons to violent felons before they could harass or prosecute a legitimate FFL dealer. Then he told Director Williams that his highest priority would be stopping Terrorist attacks against the United States and then tracking down those behind the attacks. He would work hand in hand with the new director of the INS, who promised a vigorous Illegal Alien deportation program, as well as sealing the borders again.

President Edwards called the Media, and got 1 hour of prime time on all the major networks that evening. Later that evening, President Edwards, with Directors Nelson and Williams flanking him, stepped up to the podium with the Presidential Seal and addressed the Nation.

“Good Evening, I have some important announcements to make. Since the Assassination of President Kerry by a foreign power, I have assumed the duties of President. My first order of business is to clean up the mess he made. I have rescinded all Executive Orders he signed, and have restored the Constitution as the law of the land. On my left and right are my new directors for the new and improved ATF and FBI. No longer will Jack Booted Thugs be found wearing a Federal Badge. The ATF is out of the door-kicking business permanently. I have re-tasked them with 2 duties. 1) To prevent smuggling of weapons into or out of the United States, and 2) To stop illegal weapons sales to violent felons. We’re not interested in a legitimate gun dealer who through no fault of his own accidentally sells a weapon to a violent felon. We are going to go after the illegal arms trade that floods our cities with weapons and provides them to people who shouldn’t own them. Director Williams will head up a New FBI and will concentrate on stopping Terrorist attacks against the United States. They will work closely with the INS in identifying and deporting Illegal Aliens who are deemed a security risk to the United States.

Also, by Executive Order, I have disbanded the Bureau of Land Management, and returned all Federal lands under their jurisdiction back to their respective states. The Federal Government has no business owning any more land than it needs for Government offices or Active Military installations. Any unused or surplus properties and buildings have also been turned over to their respective states. You may have heard rumors that Nevada and Utah had seceded from the Union. I have received assurances from both Governors that those rumors were false. I also hereby return all National Guard units that had been federalized by President Kerry to the jurisdiction of their home states. If we need additional National Guard troops to pacify the cities, the Governors of their respective states now have full authority to use them as they see fit. I also hereby repeal all anti-gun measures my predecessor enacted that are against the clear intent of the Constitution. There will be reasonable controls on gun ownership and usage, but I will NOT allow banning of the lawful ownership and possession of weapons that were legal before he took office.

I have submitted a list of political moderates for my cabinet officers. They are all professionals who have worked in the real world until now, and can give me the best advice for rebuilding our country and the infrastructure. I expect them to be approved by the Senate this week, or I'll personally appear before the entire House and Senate in joint session and ask then why the Hell not! The time for petty partisanship and bickering have ended, our country is facing an emergency, and if we don't act swiftly, we could be facing the end of the United States as we know it!

Good Night and God Bless the USA!"

Jackie sat glued to the TV, as did everyone else in America. She felt that if President Edwards came through on his promises, that maybe we could get out of this mess.

The next day, she received an E-mail from Directors Nelson and Williams asking her to come to DC to discuss improving the training of Federal Agents, specifically their shooting abilities. The letter authorized her to travel any way she felt comfortable, and bill the government for the costs. She took a copy to Darrell, who agreed that she could use the company plane, and he would fly with her, since their project was on hold due to the attacks anyway. Jackie remembered she still had a Federal CCW, and replied to the letter, asking if they could grant her husband Darrell a Federal CCW since he was accompanying her. 1 hour later, they replied, enclosing a temporary Federal CCW letter, granting Darrell Hayes full federal weapons privileges. Jackie thought "Nice to have low friends in High places!" and showed Darrell the letter, and explained that he could now carry virtually anywhere in the United States, with the exception of the White House, since the Secret Service didn't let even Federal Agents or Directors go armed in the White House. They packed their overnight bags, and Jackie decided to pack her fanny pack kit just in case. She had bad luck flying in small planes before.

The next morning after breakfast, Steve and Darrell pre-flighted the Twin Commander, and Jackie had the entire passenger compartment to herself. At 300 knots, it would be a long flight, so she brought several books, as well as a legal pad and several pens to jot down ideas. A couple of hours later, Darrell joined her and suggested they join the mile high club. Jackie blushed beet red, then mentioned that there wasn't a shower in the plane. Darrell admitted he had already booked a suite at a fancy hotel for the night, and they would have plenty of time after the flight to get cleaned up. Jackie sighed and said "Oh All Right - just make sure the cabin door is locked!" Steve heard some interesting sounds coming from the passenger cabin, and figured that Darrell and Jackie were joining the mile high club. He put his headset on to drown out the sounds, or he would have a hard time concentrating on his flying.

When they landed in Kansas to refuel, Steve commented that they both needed to straighten their clothes before someone else noticed. Jackie blushed, and Darrell started laughing "Thanks Steve. I always wanted to do that!"

Being a natural smarta\$\$, Steve said "Glad you waited until Jackie was aboard!" Darrell almost punched Steve in the shoulder, then realized Steve was kidding, and if he hurt Steve, he might not get a chance at a repeat performance on the way back. When the plane was fueled and serviced, they got back aboard, and took off for Washington DC. 3 hours later, they landed at a private airport in Maryland, and the limousine was waiting for them as they deplaned. The driver threw their bags in the trunk, and drove to the Watergate hotel. Jackie had a good laugh when she saw the name of the hotel, then told Darrell to make sure he didn't call for any plumbers. Darrell just looked at her for a couple of seconds, then it dawned on him - they were staying at the Watergate hotel. Duh! Then he started laughing too. They went up to their suite, which had 2 separate bedrooms, and a big common living area. When their bags were brought up, Darrell suggested they take a shower - together!

"Haven't you had enough you horny old goat! I've got an interview in a couple of hours, and you want to fool around! How about a rain check for tonight?"

Darrell reluctantly agreed to the rain check, and Jackie managed to take a shower by herself. So as not to give Darrell any ideas, she dressed in the bathroom. When she walked out completely dressed, Darrell said "No Fair!" Jackie made the "violins" motion with her thumb and forefinger, and he started to laugh. Darrell took a quick shower, and when he was dressed, they were driven to the ATF headquarters. When they went through security, they both "pinged" the metal detector, and when they showed their Federal CCWs, they were admitted with red Visitor Badges. The red stripe meant they were armed with Federal privileges. A Blue stripe on a Visitor badge meant that they were unarmed. They were escorted to Director Nelson's office, and were met by the Director. Jackie quipped "Long time no see! Nice digs, I'm glad you got the promotion." The director shook hands with both of them and when they were seated, he

started talking “Jackie, I hate to spring this on you cold like this, but I’m busier than a 1-armed paper hanger. I need you to act as a Firearms Training Consultant for both the ATF and FBI. You did so well in Reno that we’ve decided to implement your ideas nationwide. It seems the previous instructors were more worried about agents shooting for scores to qualify, that real-life shooting scenarios like you were using. I really could have e-mailed you the proposal, but I wanted to let you guys see Washington and get some time off on the government’s dime. You aren’t going to be required to do the training personally, but I’d like you to consult on a new training program, and train the trainers. Actually more like re-train the trainers, since they are all excellent shots.”

“Director Nelson, I don’t know if I’m qualified to do this, but if you want my help, I’m more than willing to help.”

“Thanks Jackie, here’s a copy of all the paperwork you need to review as well as an employment contract for the ATF and FBI. You still won’t have Agent Status with either department, but you will be in charge of a new Training and Tactics department, consisting of you and the existing trainers. You can do most of the work from home, but you’ll have to fly to DC at least once a month for meetings with the trainers, plus a 2-week training period for you to train the trainers. There are several documents you need to sign as well. Since the FBI has already did a background check on you, we don’t need to wait for your clearances to have you start work. Just FedEx the documents back to my attention, and we’ll get to work.”

Director Nelson stood, shook their hands, and escorted them back to the bank of elevators. When they got down to the ground floor, their limo driver was waiting for them right outside the security zone. They returned their Visitor badges to the Security desk, and followed the driver back to the limo. On the way back, Jackie started reading the documents.

“Darrell, Holy Cow - get a load of this. They want to pay me \$100K per year plus expenses to act as a consultant to the FBI and the ATF. This letter also authorizes us to purchase any weapons we want for training purposes. How’d you like to have an H&K MP-5/10SD?”

“What the heck is that?”

It’s a submachine gun made by Heckler and Koch based on the MP-5. The Secret Service wanted a more powerful weapon with a better capability of defeating body armor. They selected the full-power 10mm round for the weapon, and they ordered a large enough quantity to guarantee a full production run. The SD suffix means it’s a suppressed weapon. With the suppressor attached, its sound signature is no greater than a pellet rifle. It’s capable of either Full-Auto fire, or semi-auto fire.”

“I think someone’s been watching too many Chuck Norris Movies!”

“If you’re referring to “Invasion USA” I think those were Ingram Mac-10’s. The MP-5 wasn’t even built yet!”

“Yeah - Whatever! Ask a Gun Nut a simple question, and get a dissertation. Actually, IF I were to get something to defend the compound, some Bouncing Betty mines would be nice!”

“Whoa - Mr. Tree Hugger - Where did you hear about that mine?”

“Remember “Behind Enemy lines”? You were watching the movie, and there was that scene where he’s running through this minefield laced with trip wires, then the guys chasing him trip one and it jumps a couple of feet in the air before detonating. You told me those were called Bouncing Betties - I thought they were typical Military Weapons - Indiscriminate Killers. Anyway, if you HAD to get some serious hardware, I think we’d be better served by some Claymores and Bouncing Betties.”

“Darrell, I was just kidding!”

They arrived at the Hotel, and Jackie finished reviewing the documents before dinner, and borrowed the hotel’s fax machine to fax a copy to Jim for review. They went to dinner at the exclusive restaurant downstairs. Jackie wondered how they got a table, then figured that either the ATF and FBI might have been helping them, or else Darrell was craftier than she thought. After dinner, the Front Desk clerk said there was a message for them. Jim had called, and the message approved the contracts as written. Jackie retrieved the contracts, signed where it indicated, made 3 copies, kept 1, FedExed 1 to Director Nelson’s office, and a copy to Jim for his files. With that out of the way, they went upstairs so Darrell could redeem his rain check.

Chapter 46

They spent the rest of the week touring “official” DC. Darrell felt funny wearing a concealed P-14 everywhere he went, but Jackie told him that a Federal CCW wasn’t much good if you didn’t use it! When they tripped metal detectors, Jackie was ready with laminated copies of their Federal CCWs, and they were let in the building without any further fuss. Jackie called Director Nelson at the end of the week to see if they should fly back home or stay there. He said they might as well fly home, since he still had to knock a few heads together to get this program up and running. Jackie figured there would be resistance to an outside consultant, and the fact that she was a woman didn’t help either. They flew home that morning, and just as she had suspected, Darrell wanted a repeat of the previous flight’s entertainment. When they arrived in Winnemucca, Jackie was exhausted and dragged herself home and went straight to bed.

In Russia, there was a rash of human suicide bombers, but for the first time, they were attacking Moscow itself. President Putin took the extreme measure of telling the Militia to arrest and deport any Moslems who weren’t citizens, and to detain anyone they suspected of terrorism. Millions of Moslems lived in Russia, and weren’t happy with the new orders. In Moslem enclaves, the Militia went door to door, and the phrase “Your papers please” was heard once again in Russia, reminding some old timers of the Bad Old Days of the KGB and the USSR. As the body count continued to mount, President Putin was at his wit’s end about what to do. Finally, in desperation, he contacted President Edwards. While he didn’t have any concrete suggestions to stop the bombings, he did agree to work together to stop the attacks at the source.

He knew that someone outside of the region was calling the shots, since the attacks were too well organized and orchestrated. That gave President Edwards an idea, and called his National Security Advisor, and asked him if they had checked all the Echelon intercepts in all Muslim countries, even ones that they thought were routine. He said they didn’t have the manpower, and President Edwards said he would by the end of the day. He called the director of the NSA, and asked him what they would need to analyze all the Echelon intercepts in Moslem countries. The director gave him a long list, and the President told him that he’d get on it. He called the Senate and House leadership, and told them he needed an emergency appropriations bill to hire 200 additional analysts for the NSA. When he told them why, they told him to go ahead, and they’d take care of the details. He called the director of the NSA back, and told him to hire 200 analysts, and get cracking on those intercepts. He knew that the key to the attacks was in that stack of intercepts that hadn’t been analyzed.

Things continued to get worse instead of better in Russia. Vladimir Putin was wondering where they got all these suicide bombers. He remembered something he had read about a psy-ops tactic the Army had used against the Moro Tribesmen, and decided that drastic

measures were in order. He talked to his Director of the Department of State Security, and while he thought something like that was reprehensible, he knew it would be effective. From now on, any bomber's remains would be wrapped in a pigskin before they were buried in an unmarked grave. President Putin allowed the media to record the first time it happened, and the Moslem citizens were outraged, but within a month, the bombings slowed, then eventually stopped. He thought correctly that the motivation for volunteering for a suicide bomber was a free trip to paradise, and burying the body in a pigskin damned the bomber to hell, so the motivation for becoming a bomber disappeared as soon as word spread. He knew this was only a break in the action, and whoever was behind the attacks would switch tactics soon. He decided to put on a full-court press, and turned loose the Department of State Security to dig for clues, and to leave no stone unturned in their attempts to locate the leaders of the attacks.

The next day, Manny stood them down from Condition Yellow to Orange, meaning everyone was armed with their sidearms, but they were free to come and go after alerting Manny as to where they were going, and when they would be back. The funny thing was everyone except the kids had a CCW, and were already carrying, so Condition Orange was the same for them as condition Green, since they were always armed anyways after 2 attacks. Manny still kept the RPVs flying, but cut down from 4 to 2 flying at any one time. Jackie forwarded a copy of the letter she had from the ATF to Governor Guinn's office. She suggested that if the State would sell/loan them a deuce-and-a-half full of Claymores and M-16APM Bouncing Betty's, they'd dispose of all their IED's that the ATF was worried about. Governor Guinn's aide verified the authenticity of the letter, and recommended they sell the Ranch a truck full of surplus Claymores and Bouncing Betties. The Governor approved, and the next day, a 2-vehicle military convoy left from the nearest National Guard storage depot with as many Claymores and Bouncing Betties as they could spare, including the wires and detonators. Later that afternoon, Manny almost hit the panic button when a Hummer armed with a Ma Deuce showed up at the front gate escorting a National Guard 2.5 ton truck. He called Jackie to see if she knew anything about it. "Sorry Manny - forgot to tell you the Governor wanted to trade us our IED's for Claymores and Bouncing Betties. I think they're here to make a delivery."

Manny unlocked the gate, which opened by itself, which also disarmed the anti-vehicle mine. The Hummer and the truck drove to the center of the compound, and Manny directed them to a parking spot next to the Security building so they wouldn't have to haul the stuff so far. Manny was expecting a couple of cases, and you could have knocked him over with a feather when the canvas back of the deuce and a half was opened, and it was stacked to the canvas cover with cases of Claymores and Bouncing Betty mines! There were enough explosives to blow the compound into orbit in the back of that truck. When the Hummer had parked, a Master Sergeant got out of the passenger seat, and walked over to Manny, who almost saluted out of reflex until he remembered 2 things: He was a civilian in civilian clothes, and in the Army, Master Sergeants were NCOs and weren't routinely saluted by enlisted personnel. Still he shook the Sergeant's

hand, and thanked him for delivering the hardware. After introductions were made, the MSgt. told Manny that he had the rest of the afternoon to kill, and he was curious about their security setup. Manny showed him the entire setup, and described the IED's they had set up and installed. He was impressed, and said "No wonder those Ragheads were taken out so easy - you've got enough firepower to take out a light division."

"You should have seen it before we blew off half our ordinance taking out the 2 attacks."

The Master Sergeant let out a low whistle, then showed Manny the inventory list of everything they were delivering. At the bottom of the list, Manny spotted a familiar number. "M-72's - I don't remember ordering any LAW rockets?"

"These are the older versions of the M-72s; we've got a bunch of the newer A2 and A3 versions. These were destined for destruction as obsolete weapons, but they still work, so my CO said to load them on the truck and get rid of them. They'll take out anything besides a main battle tank out to 200 meters. They're armed with HEAT warheads. We had 24 left in inventory, so we brought all of them. Besides, you never know if the Chinese decided to attack, you might need them!"

"Very Funny Sergeant - they're about the only people who haven't attacked the compound."

"Manny, funny you mentioned them; they've been strangely quiet since the attacks in the Middle East. It's just like your kids, when they're too quiet, they're either asleep or up to something that's going to get their bottoms spanked, and I don't think the Chinese are asleep. They're plenty mad that their cheap oil supplies have been cut off due to the bombings, and they are looking covetously at Siberia since the Russkies are having so many problems with terrorist attacks. They're just mad enough at the US to attack us, so who knows what they're thinking. Anyway, keep your guard up, because if they do attack, the only chance they have of succeeding will be a sneak attack."

"Thanks Sergeant, I'll keep that in mind."

The Sergeant got back in his Hummer, and they drove through the gates headed back to their base.

Jackie saw the convoy leaving the ranch, and her curiosity got the better of her, so she headed over to the Security bunker to see what they had delivered. Manny handed her the inventory sheet. There were over 1,000 Claymore command detonated mines with 10 miles of wire and enough detonators to control all of them in a big daisy chain. They also received thousands of M16-APM Bouncing Betty mines and enough trip wire to interlace them into deadly spider's web patterns. They had also provided copies of all the relevant manuals to set up, arm and secure the mines. Jackie noted the last entry as well, 24 M -72

LAW rockets!

“Manny - I didn’t order any anti-tank rockets?”

“Jackie, I talked to the Master Sergeant who delivered all this ordinance. He said the M-72s were obsolete and were scheduled for destruction, so instead of destroying them, their CO decided to give them to us. They’re in perfect working order, they’ve just been replaced in the inventory with newer more capable weapons -the A2 and A3 variants. They’ll take out anything lighter than a tank at 200 meters, and like he said, you never know if we might need them.”

After saying “Hasta La Vista” to Manny, she walked over to talk to Darrell.

“Well dear, you got your wish, we now have enough Claymores and Bouncing Betty mines to blow the entire compound into orbit! They also gave us 24 LAW rockets.”

“You mean like in Beverly Hills Cop”?

“Yeah, except these are real, and not props. I guess someone thought we might get attacked by something bigger and badder than a couple of Ragheads in a pickup truck.”

The Revolutionary Council met at the same café again, the Security Chief was livid! Not only did they ignore his advice about meeting at the same place, they didn’t mount the attacks and attack the targets he had listed. Instead, they had targeted civilian gatherings, and wasted a perfectly good opportunity to do some serious damage to the Russians. He wanted them to destroy the Russian infrastructure, which was even more fragile than the US’s infrastructure, since it had all been built and designed during the Heyday of the old USSR, and was crumbling due to shoddy workmanship and poor maintenance. A few well-placed explosions could collapse Moscow’s entire power grid, and it would take twice as long for the Russians to get it back up due to the age of the equipment, and the fact that they had no spares. Their water systems could be permanently contaminated by injecting toxins and germs into many vulnerable points in the system. Instead the stupid Mullahs had done the same things they had always done - human suicide bombers aimed at civilian targets. The response of President Putin was reprehensible, but very effective. He’d have to take the President’s willingness to do whatever was necessary to defend his country into account in planning any future attacks.

The next day, Manny contacted his cousin who had installed the fencing, and asked him if he could do another fence 50 yards inside the existing one. When he asked why, Manny told him he wanted to install a minefield. He thought Manny had totally flipped, but agreed to work up a quote and get back to him. With the cattle, they had to enclose their minefield inside a fence, or risk blowing the cattle sky high. It would limit the effectiveness of the minefield, but at the same time, he could use it to channel any attack

through a couple of choke points, and saturate those choke points with cross-firing Claymore mines, making the chokepoints into a kill box. He could also defend the minefield against attack by 3 belts of Claymores facing toward the outer fence. Anyone attacking the property on foot would be either forced to deal with a minefield protected by Claymores, or else get funneled into a kill box of Claymore mines. He now had 24 LAW rockets to deal with armor as well as the RPGs he still had. Now all he needed was some Stingers to deal with armed choppers or planes! He knew the probability of getting his hands on some Stingers was about the same as his chances of getting elected President of the United States - Slim and/or None!

That afternoon, everyone gathered for target practice, including all the board members and their wives. They were just barely pregnant, so there was minimal risk to their babies. They insisted they be capable of defending themselves and their houses, and that gave Jackie an idea. After practice, she called the Class III dealer and asked him about buying some more Mossberg 590A1 shotguns with the 9-shot magazines, ghost ring sights, synthetic stock, heavy wall 20" barrel, metal trigger guard and safety button. For an additional \$20 each, he could install a 6-shot Sidesaddle onto the receiver. For an additional \$50, he could throw in the light mount forend. Jackie asked him when he could have them ready. He said it would take about an hour to replace the forend and mount the sidesaddle. She asked him how much he would charge for 2 of them. He did some quick calculations, taking into account his cost, and a 20% markup, plus parts and labor, and quoted her \$500 each. Since the MSRP of the bare shotgun was \$586, it was a good deal. He said he could have them done in a couple of hours. Jackie checked with Manny, who said he would love to ride shotgun again, except this time, could they take the turns a little slower? Jackie laughed her head off, remembering the look on Manny's face when he thought she was about to roll the pickup in a turn. She said she'd pick him up in an hour, and to bring his Rosary Beads if he thought they would help. Manny was muttering to himself about the crazy lady, but said OK. Jackie told the dealer she'd be there in about 2 hours to pick them up, as well as another case of Federal Tactical 00 Buck 12 gauge ammo. He said they'd be ready in about 2 hours. An hour later, she showed up at Manny's door, and when he got in, he made a big production of hanging his rosary beads over the rearview mirror and crossing himself. If Jackie's door had been open, she might have fallen out she was laughing so hard. Manny belted himself in like he was going for a ride in a stunt car, and Jackie shook her head, then drove off with Manny cradling her Witness Protection shotgun. When they arrived at the gun store, both shotguns were ready, and he had the case of shotgun ammo sitting next to them. Jackie quickly filled out the paperwork, then they both loaded the case of ammo and the shotguns into the back of the cab, and took off. This time, Jackie kept all 4 wheels on the ground, for which Manny was eternally grateful. An hour later, they arrived back at the ranch, and Jackie gave the shotguns to the new wives, and told them to go to the range tomorrow, and she'd show them how to use them. Their eyes got as big as saucers. The only place they had seen such a wicked looking shotgun was in the movies. Jackie had to get back to feed Max and make Darrell's dinner, so she told them she would see them

tomorrow, and hurried back to her house. Max was noticeably bigger, and flattened her as soon as she got inside the door.

“Good to see you too Max, now get off me you big moose!”

Max let her up, but kept hounding her until she took him outside to play catch. When they were finished, Jackie realized that dinner would either have to be something she could make fast, or else dinner would be late. She took 2 steaks out of the refrigerator, and started heating the cast iron skillet until it was red hot, then added the steaks. She took out a bag of salad greens, added a large handful to each bowl, and got out the dressings. Darrell walked in right as the steaks finished up.

Jackie said “Good timing dear - dinner’s ready.”

Max pounced on Darrell, but he was ready for it, so all he succeeded in doing was to put his paws on Darrell’s shoulders, and give him a wet slobbery Doggie Kiss.

“Yuck - Dog Germs!” “Jackie, can you hold dinner a minute while I change and clean up?” Darrell ran into the bedroom, and came back a minute later in sweats. Jackie fixed Max’s dinner and he pigged out while they sat down to eat dinner.

Chapter 47

President Edwards took advantage of the lull in Terrorist attacks to strengthen the borders, refit and rearm the military, and give the National Guard troops a well deserved rest. He tripled military spending, and reinstated several programs his predecessor had cancelled. He even authorized the return to duty of any recently RIFed military personnel that wanted to return to duty, with their CO's approval. The Army, Navy and Marines were so busy rebuilding and rearming that they entirely forgot about the world outside our coastal waters, in the final analysis, this wasn't such a hot idea. China viewed the lack of attention and port visits to Taiwan by the Pacific Fleet as a change in political views, and was going full-bore with their own military developments. They used the huge trade imbalances to finance their military buildup, and were stockpiling diesel and jet fuel instead of wasting it training Northern divisions to repel non-existent Russian threat. Russia was too busy trying to put down a revolution in their Southern satellites to try anything against China.

On the surface, it seemed to the American Public that World Peace had broken out, but things weren't what they seemed. Jackie was getting pretty good at reading tea leaves, and figured that China was going to attack the US or Russia in the next 5 to 10 years. She got together with Manny and decided to keep their IED's and reinforce them with the Claymores and Bouncing Betties. No where in the ATF letter did they order Jackie to destroy their IED's, they only hoped she would get rid of them when given military technology. She remembered one thing about IED's is that they don't LOOK military, and could fool a real military into thinking they were defenseless, when that harmless looking fence post was really a well-disguised pipe bomb, or that gopher hole was holding a beer can mortar that could either pop up 10 feet and detonate, shredding anything within 10 yards or pop up 100 feet to take out a hovering chopper, or even fly several hundred yards downrange to counter a mortar attack. Manny had several other nefarious ideas and Jackie told him what she was thinking, and he told her what the Master Sergeant had told him. They both got an attack of the "willies" at the same time. Jackie highly recommended implementing any ideas he had, since they both were thinking the same thing - "What If..."!

When she finished working with Manny, she went home to work on her ATF/FBI training project. Later that afternoon, she got an E-mail from Director Nelson telling her everything was good to go. She replied to his e-mail and suggested he schedule a meeting with everyone involved in the existing training program so she could meet them all at once. She remembered she needed to get her own practice time in if she were going to impress the trainers. Most of them were probably as good of a shot as she was. She reviewed the existing syllabus for training on pistol marksmanship, and found several flaws, and noted them and her fix for them. She didn't know as much about carbine or subgun shooting, but she reviewed their syllabus anyway, and decided she had some

questions for their trainers as well. Right before she wrapped things up and shut down for the night, she received an e-mail from Director Nelson asking if next Wednesday would be OK. She checked her calendar, called Darrell, who checked his and Steve's calendars, and told her "gopher it!"

"Darrell, that was almost as bad as your pun about the nuns! Maybe this time I will wear a habit so I can get some rest during the flight!"

"I guess this means I have to leave the Tarzan loincloth at home this time?"

"You could always try that hot pink thong you like so much!"

"Ewww - Jackie, that was gross - it will take me all day just to get that image out of my mind!"

Jackie fixed dinner and played with Max. Max was almost 6 months old by now, and really was a moose since he was tipping the scales at 100 pounds. Pretty soon he'd weigh as much as Jackie. They had been leaving him outside during the day now that he was bigger, and she decided to ask Manny to make a big dog house for Max so he could stay outside at night. He had already chased several coyotes away that had stayed too long after daylight inside the compound lusting after the chickens. Max didn't have any problems with the Australian Cattle dogs, since they stayed with the cattle 24/7, even when the ranch hands had gone home to bed. The dogs drank from the same stock tanks as the cattle, and had squirrel-proof self-service food bins near the stock tanks that the ranch hands kept full. The dogs each wore a radio transmitter collar that unlocked the food bins when they were within 3 feet of the bin to keep the squirrels and coyotes out of them. The dogs not only herded the cattle, but defended them at night. Coyotes quickly learned that getting chased by a pack of cattle dogs could shorten their lives considerably, and they avoided the cattle.

Manny had to reinforce the chicken coop after a coyote got to a chicken and killed it before Max chased it off. Max got a big reward for that from Manny, who Max thought of as his big buddy, since he played with Manny almost as much as Jackie and Darrell now. He recognized everyone that belonged in the compound, and didn't bark unless he saw something that didn't belong. The first time the Sheriff showed up after they let Max stay outside, he stayed in the truck until Jackie walked up and called Max off. Later, after Max had a chance to sniff the Sheriff, and seeing Jackie was Ok with him, he started trying to get the Sheriff to throw his tennis ball for him. Max went through about a tennis ball a week, so Jackie kept several cans in storage, and a 100 foot section of heavy cotton rope to make tug-of-war toys. They wanted 5 dollars at Petsmart for a 3-foot piece of multicolored rope, and she found out she could buy 100 feet of plain cotton rope from the local hardware store for a little over \$20.00.

The following Tuesday, Jackie, Steve, and Darrell boarded the plane to Washington DC. Jackie had rented a “flying nun” costume from a theatrical supply company as a joke, and wore it onto the plane. Not to be outdone, after Steve was flying straight and level, Darrell locked the cabin door, and showed Jackie he was wearing his Tarzan loincloth. They both laughed until they almost fell down, then Jackie told Darrell “Sorry Tarzan, but Jane has a bunch of work to do, maybe tonight?”

When they de-planed in Kansas, she got so sick and tired of the ground crew calling her “Sister” that she went into the bathroom and changed back into her regular clothes. When they arrived in DC, they were met by a limousine that drove them to the Watergate. The next day, Jackie was dropped off at the ATF office, while Darrell and Steve went to the Aerospace Museum at the Smithsonian Institute. Jackie wasn’t really into planes, and they thought it would be a good way for Darrell and Steve to kill a day while staying out of trouble. Darrell forgot he was packing until the metal detector pinged. They were admitted when Darrell produced his Federal CCW. Steve got a good laugh until Darrell gave him the “can it” look. On the way back from the Smithsonian, they took a detour to avoid traffic, and what he saw made Darrell glad he had his CCW with him, and made Steve real nervous and envious. When they got to the Hotel, Darrell was amazed that you could go 2 miles and be transported from lavish luxury to abject poverty.

Meanwhile Jackie met the trainers, and she could feel the hostility as soon as she entered the room. As soon as Director Nelson left, she set the record straight. “Ladies and Gentlemen, I’m not here to tell you how to do your jobs, or replace any of you. Director Nelson wanted me to change a few things about how the field agents were taught to think and shoot. All I want to do is change the mindset in training from qualification to tactical shooting. I know all agents have to qualify, but once they are qualified I think we can switch to tactical shooting techniques instead of shooting groups at bullseyes, because if I remember correctly, a paper target never shot back!”

From one of the senior instructors in the back came the comment “I’ve been trying to do this for years!”

Jackie replied “I thought so. The advantage I have is I’m an outsider that is totally outside the chain of command with a mandate from the Director to change things, so now’s your chance. We can either keep teaching bullseyes and getting agents killed, or we can teach basic marksmanship and then tactical thinking and shooting techniques. I’ll admit right now, my experience is in pistol training, not subguns or carbines. I studied the statistics over the last week or so, and noticed that 99% of the shootings are defensive rather than offensive and involve pistols rather than subguns or carbines, which means the agent is reacting to the action of another. As you well know, actions are always faster than reactions, so we need to teach the agents how to react to save their lives. Shooting back isn’t always the best answer, especially if cover is available. I’ve gone over the shooting syllabus and made some recommendations. I also have a list of books about

tactical shooting and the tactical mentality I would like you to review and implement the positive aspects of the books. There is no book solution to tactical shooting in a Law Enforcement situation. The whole goal of everything we do here is to make sure the agents go home in one piece every night.”

From the back of the room she heard several “All Right” and “It’s About Time” comments - evidently she had gotten over their initial hostility. Now all she had to do was get them to accept her methods - that would be a harder sell. They adjourned to the shooting range, where they all picked up eye and ear protection. Jackie spoke to the crowd “I’m going to give a little demonstration of a multiple assailant Failure to stop drill. I’ll be using my personal sidearm, a Para Ordinance P-14 limited in .45 acp, with a Bladetech IWB holster and a double-mag offside mag carrier. I’m going to start from the IPSC ready position instead of the interview position, since it’s more difficult, and I’m not a LEO. I see the targets are set up on Lane 1, so if everyone would don their eyes and ears, and stand about 6 feet back so I don’t hit anyone with the brass. If I could get a volunteer to run the timer I’d appreciate it. I know several of you are capable of performing this demonstration as well or even better than I do, but I just wanted to give everyone an idea of what I’m talking about.”

In front of her were 5 B-27 silhouettes at 20 yards, instead of 25 yards, since the ATF policy stated that pistols shouldn’t be used outside of 20 yards except when there is no alternative. Jackie knew that the closer range could shave a few fractions of a second off her time, and had been practicing at 20 yards for a week before they came to DC. She carefully unloaded her carry ammo, which several instructors noted approvingly was the Cor-bon 200gr JHP Flying Ashcan round, and reloaded with 230gr FMJ ammo. When all 3 mags were full, she put 2 into her off-side mag holder and 1 in the gun, cycled it, topped off the mag, then safed the gun and stuck it in her holster. She left her jacket on, since it was her cover garment for this demonstration, since her blouse was tucked in. When she was finished, she put her eyes and ears on, then asked the volunteer to step forward to her left and when her hands were in the surrender position, to push the button that started the timer, and hold still. She checked to make sure the range was clear, and nodded to the volunteer with the timer, who gave her a thumbs-up. She stepped forward to the line, and raised her hands into the Surrender position. Her hands had only been up a fraction of a second when he triggered the timer. As soon as it beeped, she swept her jacket out of the way, dropped her right hand to her holster, moved her feet into a right-handed Weaver stance, and met the gun coming forward with her left hand. Both hands met in the middle, and as soon as the sights locked on the first target, she quickly double-tapped it, and followed up with a head shot, swivelled right and repeated the process 4 more times. The gun locked open as soon as she fired the 15th shot. The volunteer was looking at the timer, and couldn’t believe his eyes. She had fired a 15-round 5-target Failure to Stop drill in 4.27 seconds! Their fastest instructor only did it in 4 seconds flat. They checked her targets, but they already knew that all 15 rounds would be where they belonged.

“This is a standard IPSC shooting stage, but as you can see, it has a tactical element. Let’s say the 5 targets are at different distances, and the shooter had to make a decision about who to engage first. Let’s say 1 guy is at 5 yards armed with a knife, one is at 21 feet bare handed, and another is at 15 yards with a shotgun, and one is at 20 yards with an AK-47, and the 5th guy has a pistol in his hands, aimed at you at 10 yards. Now in real life, most shooters won’t survive an encounter like this, but it sets up scenarios that make the student think, and thinking slows down the shooting process. We need to make the decision automatic by practicing these scenarios over and over again. This is just one example of tactical shooting. Over the coming months and years, we can explore and develop a new curriculum based on tactical shooting instead of bullseye shooting.” When she finished the demonstration, everyone wanted to talk to her at once. She suggested they adjourn to the conference room for a brainstorming session. She spent the rest of the afternoon talking to the instructors, with a very animated conversation. Jackie made sure someone tape recorded this, and another took notes in case they missed something.

When they finally let her go, she was exhausted, and felt like falling asleep in the limousine. She called Darrell, told him she was dog tired, and to order room service, then she took a nap in the backseat of the limousine. She woke up an hour later when they drove up to the hotel. The doorman opened the door, and she managed to walk up to her room without falling down. Darrell let her in, and she saw that dinner had been delivered. She had ordered Spaghetti since she was in a hurry to get to bed, and didn’t want anything that would interfere with her sleep. She sat down, tucked a napkin into her blouse as a bib, and dug in. When she finished, she took a shower and went right to sleep. The next morning, a very happy Director Nelson was on the phone congratulating her “Jackie, I don’t know how you did it, but my Chief Instructor was praising you to anyone who would listen this morning. He wants to implement your changes as soon as possible. You did terrific. Go ahead and go home and get some rest - you deserve it!” Jackie thanked him, then hung up the phone. They were driven in the limousine to their aircraft, and flew all the way home without incident. Jackie slept all the way home, and didn’t wake up until they landed in Winnemucca.

During this time, they slowly made improvements to the ranch, and first Mercedes, then Angela had their first child. Maria went all out planning the baby shower, and by the time the kids were born, they had everything they would ever need for the new infants. One gift that was slightly premature but still appreciated was a handgun vault to mount underneath their bedside tables. They were the type that you slid your hand into and tapped a code to open the vault. In case the battery wore out, they had a key backup. Since all their long guns with the exception of the shotguns were stored at the armory, they didn’t need gun closets. They’d worry about securing the shotguns when the kids got old enough to manipulate them, since they were stored Cruiser Ready, and couldn’t be fired without cycling the action, which took considerable strength. Mercedes and Angela had both become very good shots with their shotguns, since they were responsible for the final security of their homes and babies. Any terrorist who tried to attack them

and managed to get past everyone else would have to get past a mother defending her kids with a 12-gauge shotgun! The 590 had a total of 15 rounds on tap between the magazine and the sidesaddle, and they each had a 25-round bandoleer full of 00 buckshot and slugs that they thought made them look like a “Bandito”! Since they weren’t part of the self-defense teams, they didn’t need a Blackhawk vest, but Jackie got them a Last Chance slip-on level IIa vest just in case.

The 2 new fathers realized their wives wanted a big family, and thought that a 3-bedroom house would be too small. They decided to split their lots in half, and build a 5 bedroom house on the back half for each of them, and give their existing houses to Manny’s relatives, who were cramped in their trailers. They talked to Darrell, who agreed, and talked to Jim. He called the manufacturer, who had some triple-wide 5-bedroom houses already built, and could move them down there and set up in less than 30 days. He sent an e-mail to the ranch, and the 2 new fathers approved the designs with minor modifications, like upgrading countertops and floors, and replacing the appliances with commercial grade appliances. The manufacturer thought they could still get them set up and ready to occupy within 30 days, and gave them a huge break on price since they had been sitting on their lot ever since the buyer’s financing fell through. Since this was a cash deal, they didn’t have that problem, and got right to work. 30 days later, the growing families moved into their new houses, and Manny’s relatives moved out of their trailers into their palatial (to them) new houses.

The farm was producing 5 times as much produce as they could use, and when the local grocers got wind of their organic truck farm, they offered to pay above market rates for their produce, since it would be only an hour from the field to their stores. They ended up hiring dozens of out of work Mexicans to pick their produce. Manny allowed them to take a box of produce home each day as well. They were growing corn, beans, different varieties of lettuce and salad greens, all kinds of squash, various melons, peppers, onions, and smaller quantities of various exotic and ethnic vegetables. Manny decided to put in some greenhouses to extend their growing season, and purchased rolls of woven polyethylene sheets and plastic strapping materials to make lightweight but durable greenhouses. The poly sheets weren’t really transparent, rather translucent, and diffused the light to the point that plants wouldn’t burn under it even in the hot summer sun. With the greenhouses, he could grow produce that required longer and hotter growing seasons. Manny took the rest of the money and bought even more heirloom seeds and also planted nitrogen fixers. If nothing happened besides another power outage and food shortages, they would be self-sufficient for power, water, and food, and produced enough food to supply local grocers. They were so successful that several other ranchers converted unused land to small truck farms, and soon Winnemucca had 6 truck farms supplying produce to Winnemucca and beyond. The rest of the Mexicans looking for work found work on the new farms.

Manny had the fence around the minefield completed, and stuck some more IED fence

posts into the design, thinking anyone who made it through or around the minefield would die of surprise when the fence posts on the far side of the mine field blew up and shredded them! He added even more beer can mortars to his design, and set them all up for remote detonation. The fence was far enough from the houses that if any of the IED's went off by accident, or in an unanticipated direction, there would be little or no risk to the compound. The ranch hands kept the cows well away from the fence on their side of the minefield. Their herd was expanding since they located more heifers and a couple of bulls. They slaughtered the 10 steers late in the fall when they had reached peak weight. Each family took as much meat as they wanted, and they sold the rest to people in Winnemucca. The grocers couldn't legally sell it, since it wasn't USDA inspected, but people knew about the Dun Movin ranch, and knew the butcher, and word spread that they had some prime beef for sale cheap, and it was immediately snapped up. Darrell had even decided he really liked the taste of beef when he got one of the first Prime Rib Roasts from their steers. It was lean, Juicy, and lightly marbled. Jackie made a couple of Prime Rib roasts in her oven, and several other women made the rest of the fixings, and they had a big feast of Prime Rib and all the trimmings in the office. They used to use the Conference Room, but they had grown so big as to spill over into the adjacent hall and spare offices next door. Darrell wanted to take the walls down and build a bigger Conference Room, but Jim checked with the Steel building manufacturer who told him those walls were weight bearing and couldn't be taken down. Darrell decided that next year they were going to build another Steel building for a Community and Meeting Room, since they had outgrown the original building. Manny had plans also for a bigger Security Bunker since it was too cramped with everyone in it to work as an emergency shelter for more than a couple of days. The next bunker he wanted to build would have a reinforced concrete roof, and be at least 6 feet under ground with a self-contained water, power, and air system. He realized a total nuclear fallout shelter might be beyond their reach, but what he could do would be better than what they had.

Jackie got a check for the first third of her consulting contract, and bought stuff on her list, including a couple of good used diesel trucks for Manny's relatives and more farm equipment. She located a huge military 50KW diesel generator, and another 10,000 gallon diesel tank, and made winning bids on both. She got them for way less than she had paid for the original diesel tank and generators. They added the fuel tank to the fuel farm, and co-located the generator with their other generator. They now had in excess of 50,000 gallons of Diesel and 10,000 gallons of Jet Fuel, and 30,000 gallons of propane. If someone got a RPG into them, they would land somewhere around Nebraska, so Manny surrounded the tank farm with a RPG fence to make the warhead detonate prematurely, and added top cover as well to prevent a mortar bomb from doing the same. Steve jokingly suggested mounting .50 caliber machine guns on their twin commander, but Manny vetoed the idea, since the plane couldn't take a single burst of ground fire in return. It did however give him some ideas, and he located some RPVs with some serious lifting capabilities, and had some talks with some of his cousins about some ideas he had for an RPV bomber. They thought he was nuts, but when he handed them the

cash, they paid attention.

Chapter 48

Manny wasted no time getting bids for the new community center, and decided to kill 2 birds with one stone, and locate the new shelter underneath the community center. The steel building manufacturer had another 100x300 foot building sitting on the lot unsold, due to a company going under after they ordered it, so they sold it to the Dun Movin Ranch at cost. Manny hired an excavation company to come out and dig a 12-foot deep basement that was the same size as the building, and bought all the rebar and everything they would need for the poured concrete walls. The floor, walls and ceiling would be 6 inches thick, and made from Reinforced concrete. The girders that held up the concrete roof were big enough to hold up a concrete bridge, so the shelter could theoretically take a direct hit by a 500-pounder or a near-miss from a 1000-pound bomb. Manny hired his cousins to build the building, since several had experience with heavy construction, and they worked for way less than union labor. Manny had them dig a trench and a septic field that was deep enough to drain the basement, then ran plumbing for cold water in, and sewer out of the basement. The Community Room would drain into a different septic system to eliminate any backflow problems. He tied the basement and the community room into the ranch power system, and oriented the roof of the community room so it faced south to take advantage of the huge surface of the roof. It was shingled with thin-film photovoltaic cells, and produced enough power to be self-sufficient, and keep a large battery bank in the basement fully charged.

Once the basement was completed they finished it, built interior walls to subdivide it into 10 10x30 rooms with interconnecting doors. 1 room was taken up by the battery bank, a diesel generator, and a huge water tank. The next room was an armory and pantry - they relocated the small arms from the existing armory and moved them to the new building, freeing up enough room in the old armory to safely store all the high explosives that weren't deployed in 1 room. Jackie decided to relocate everyone's basic load and LBE into the new armory, since in the event of an attack, they would move to the bigger, deeper, and more secure shelter instead of the old armory, which was really too small to hold everyone comfortably. Once they were finished, they lifted the precast roofing sections into place, and sealed up the basement. The access door wasn't quite blast-proof, but would withstand a determined attack, and hopefully stand up to a small charge of C-4. The door opened hydraulically, with 4 hydraulic rams that could lift 10 tons each, in case they needed to lift debris off the door to get out. Since the door was just bigger than a trucking pallet, something awfully heavy would have to be resting on the door to keep it from opening. Finally, they backfilled over the roof to existing grade, adding 2 feet of dirt on top of the concrete, and they built the steel building with a conventional slab foundation. They framed the door opening between the shelter and the community room with ½" steel plate, and installed another lighter door in the floor of the Community Room. There was just enough room between the 2 doors for the shelter door to open fully with the outer door closed. When they finished building the community room,

unless you knew where the shelter door was, you'd have trouble finding it, since it was well-hidden.

Their shelter wasn't state of the art by any means, but felt the risk of nuclear fallout in Winnemucca was practically non-existent. Several websites, including Blast Mapper, indicated that even if California was turned into a glowing parking lot, the majority of the fallout wouldn't start settling until it reached Utah. The 2 feet of dirt and 6 inches of reinforced concrete should easily be enough. Their air supply was filtered through 2 separate stages of HEPA filters, to allow replacement of 1 stage at a time without compromising the air supply. The air vents were well disguised and protected. The diesel exhaust and any other air exhausted from the shelter was routed through a sound chamber and a water trap to eliminate all machinery noises or smells.

Jackie didn't like what she read in the papers about China, and she got with Manny, and they made several improvements to their security that would allow them to repel even an attack by a small military force. Darrell completed their Navy contract, and received a bonus from the Secretary for getting it done ahead of time and under budget. Their integrated command and control system would be implemented fleet wide, and Sun Microsystems was building new computers as fast as they could. Within 2 years, most of the fleet had the system installed, and now knew exactly where everyone was, and where the bad guys were. The Joint Chiefs were impressed, and signed a contract for them to implement the system for the entire US Military. Darrell pointed out they had to wait for the new Soldier of the future systems to be implemented before they could equip infantry with the system, but any military vehicle could have a miniaturized version on the system either laptop based, or installed in a small computer with a separate monitor.

With money from the \$100 million contract rolling in each year, the board members of Winnemucca Systems were getting so rich that money didn't mean a lot to them. The bills were paid, the ranch was expanding, and Manny was taking care of the security issues. When they weren't flying to San Diego for meetings, they were at the shooting range burning through ammo practicing. Jackie was about to get an FFL because of all the ammo they were shooting up, when the Sheriff told her that the dealer that sold them their LEO only equipment could sell them ammo by the truckload much cheaper. The Sheriff wanted to buy at least 10 cases of ammo for each weapon the deputies used on duty, and Jackie thought that was a good idea for the Ranch, since they now had the room to store it. She inventoried their supplies, and they were down to their last 2 cases of .223 ammo and .45 acp FMJ practice ammo. They had 5 cases of battle ammo for the .223s, and 2 cases of Cor Bon JHP ammo for the .45's. She had 2 cases of Match ammo in .308, and 1 case of AP. In 12 gauge ammo, they were the shortest. They only had 1 case of 12ga birdshot, and 1 case of Federal Tactical Buckshot, and maybe 200 rounds of slugs. She talked with Darrell and he agreed that for the price, they should get 10 cases of each, so she called the Sheriff, and asked for 10 cases of 55gr FMJ .223 ammo, 10 cases of 230gr FMJ .45 ammo, 10 cases of .308 Match ammo, and 10 cases of 12ga birdshot, and

10 cases of 12ga Federal Tactical 00 Buckshot. She also ordered 5 more cases of .223 JHP ammo, 5 cases of Cor Bon JHP, and 5 cases of .308 AP ammo, and a case of 12 ga 1oz rifled slugs. He said that they would ship direct from RSR in Reno, and it would take a week max.

Manny and Jackie had been busy finding other various nefarious devices to foil an attack, and Jackie stumbled across something while she was surfing the Survivalist forums. It was a remotely- fired cannon that fired 1 pound of 1-inch ball bearings 500 feet straight up. She showed it to Manny, and they got the ingredients together. By now the pipe supply house knew Jackie on a first name basis, and was used to large and bizarre orders - This one took the cake. She needed 50 3-foot pieces of thick-wall black iron pipe, threaded on one end, and 50 black iron caps. What he had was 6-foot sections threaded on both ends, and offered to cut them in half for \$25. Jackie thought that was reasonable. Next she bought several pounds of smokeless powder, and then went to the Radio Shack, which also sold Model Rocket components, and bought a bunch of igniters and his smallest rocket motors, and his entire stock of 100-foot rolls of 18ga wire. When she got to the ranch, they carefully unloaded it, and began assembling their devices. Jackie cut some 6" diameter pieces of 1/4" plywood, drilled an 1/8" hole in the center of each cap, stuck an igniter in each A-size motor, and slid the leads through the hole and sealed it with a dot of silicone. She slipped a shunt across the leads to prevent accidents, and let the silicone cure. Manny calculated how much smokeless powder they would need to lift a pound of steel balls 500 feet in the air, and added 20% to his figures for a safety margin. Once the silicone cured, they added the correct amount of powder, the wooden wad, and the pound of steel balls. They covered the opening with saran wrap, and then covered it with aluminum foil that was wired in place. The cousins had used the auger to bore 50 40-inch deep holes where Manny wanted to bury the cannons. They were situated in a ring around the compound, and covering the most likely landing areas for helicopters or paratroopers. The cousins made the connections carefully from the igniter to the wire, made sure the connections were waterproof, and carefully slid the cannons into their holes. The cannons were ganged together in groups of 5, so they only had to run 10 wires back from the cannons to the security office.

The Secretary of the Navy got Congressional approval for the new computer system and software, and the first Naval Vessel to get the upgrade was the USS Ronald Reagan CVN-76, which was the newest of the Nimitz class of supercarriers. It was stationed in San Diego, which was perfect for the upgrade crew. It was a long involved process, and took almost a year to integrate all the ship's systems using the Sun supercomputer. The entire CIC was run on a redundant pair of Sun microcomputers. The sailors who ran the equipment marveled at the real-time display and simplified operations of the new system. As soon as they got their Aegis Cruisers and EC-2 Hawkeyes on line, they would have a total picture of everything around them above the water, out to the range of the Hawkeye's radar coverage. When the secretary read the glowing report of the CO of the Ronald Reagan, and his suggestion to immediately install the system on his Aegis

Cruisers and his EC-2 Hawkeyes, the Secretary knew he had something. Winnemucca Systems was as busy as they could be, interfacing with Sun Microsystems, and solving interface problems on the fly. Very often, one of the programmers would open up his laptop right there in the CIC, and write new code to fix an interface problem. Several of the Naval personnel helped, and Darrell made sure their commanding officer knew how helpful they were, and recommended them for commendations and early promotions.

Next they tackled the Aegis Cruisers, and after a meeting with everyone in CIC, they decided to junk all the old computer equipment and start over. It tripled the costs of the project, but solved several problems, and resulted in an awesome Aegis system. They developed several new features for the system based on their interviews with the people who actually used the system. It usually started like “You know it would be nice if...” and that’s all they needed. By the time they finished, the Aegis system was 5 times as capable as it was originally, which allowed the designers of the SAM missiles to upgrade to the SM-4 to take full advantage of the upgrades. The missiles now became a true fire and forget system, with the steering and guidance systems totally automated. What really blew the Navy away was when they found out that the new Aegis-2 plus the SM-4 were fully capable of taking out an incoming ICBM warhead and had an 80% PK with the first shot in the simulators. The system was so good that the simulators evaluated the kills as mostly skin to skin kills, meaning the SM-4 hit the ICBM warhead in mid-air.

Next they tackled the EC-2 Hawkeye, which was the easiest of all, since it had the most modern systems. When they were finished, the Navy used their notes to install the systems in the rest of the Nimitz class Aircraft Carriers, the rest of the Aegis equipped ships, and the EC-2 Hawkeyes. Finally the navy gave them permission to update the systems on the 688-I attack subs. They took the longest to do, since there were so many systems to integrate. A year later, they were ready for sea trials. Darrell volunteered to go, even though he was claustrophobic, since he couldn’t send someone else to do what he was afraid to do. Before he stepped one foot aboard a submarine, the USN put him through an abbreviated familiarization program. He got over being claustrophobic real quick when they had him do a simulated emergency escape in the tank. 2 weeks later, drove to Point Loma to meet up with the SSN 759 Jefferson City. It was one of the first 688I Los Angeles class subs, and it was stationed in San Diego, which was more convenient than flying to Groton, CT or Newport.

After he met the CO and the officers of the submarine, he was shown to the goat locker and politely asked to stay out of the way until they got to the test area. Darrell was glad he brought his laptop, because while the food was excellent, life aboard a submarine with nothing to do or see was overwhelmingly boring. Finally 2 days later, the captain called him to the conn. “Mr. Hayes to the Conn.” He walked aft and climbed several very steep flights of stairs. Finally he reached the control room, or Conn as the submarine service called it. He looked around and was amazed at all the displays. The Chief of the boat explained all the displays quickly to him, showed him the sonar displays, and the new

display for the Battlefield Situational Display. Occasionally, when their floating wire got shallow enough, or they came to periscope depth, they had their BSD updated. All their sonar information was transmitted at the same time, updating the big display in the CIC of the CVN at the center of the Carrier Battle Group, and all the other ships in the CBG equipped with the BSD. This test would check how well the BSD integrated the data from the sonar suite, including the long wire hydrophone suite and the BQQ-5E Sonar Sphere compared to the BSY-1. So far the skipper was pleased; the data was displayed in a graphical form. As soon as he assigned a target a Master Number, it appeared on the screen as a Green icon. When he updated it to a Sierra number, it turned red, and if an underwater contact, looked like a submarine. Velocity vectors showed headings and speeds of all contacts. Submariners for years had to do this in their heads, now it was available on a huge screen that showed up to 100 miles of ocean around them, and was zoomable to anything from 1 mile to 100 miles. He could selectively view all contacts, just underwater contacts, or just contacts within a certain range.

For this test, there were several older noisier 688 class subs out there moving around and a small surface fleet, including an Aegis class cruiser with the BSD system that was acting as a floating laboratory, rating how accurate the system was. The CO of the Aegis cruiser was amazed, as soon as the submarine detected a new contact, it appeared on his screen, unless the sub was too deep to transmit, but that was solvable by SOP. If the sub detected a threat to a nearby fleet, all he had to do was come shallow enough for their floating wire to transmit and receive BSD data. The BSD also showed the location of all friendly forces equipped with the BSD. After 2 days, the test was deemed a success, and the Jefferson City was told to head for home. 2 days later, they docked at the Sub Base in San Diego, and a very tired but happy Darrell got off the boat. The Skipper wrote a glowing report and recommended the BSY-1 be replaced fleet wide by the BSD. Darrell flew home to Winnemucca, and the reports were couriered to the attention of the Secretary of the Navy. He did some number crunching, and realized it would be cheaper to install the unit fleet-wide, even to the smaller ASW destroyers, so they could work more closely with the 688I attack subs when they were defending a carrier battle group. It meant he'd have to scrap plans to build another Aegis cruiser, but the older ones would be perfectly useful with the new BSD equipment.

Since the equipment was working and the Navy could install their own units, the Secretary released the remainder of the \$100 million promised to Winnemucca Systems, and sent them a letter saying Bravo Zulu, and that the program was a success. He had them in mind for a couple of other projects, but he was pretty sure the Air Force, Army and Marines would want their own versions of the BSD, and they owned the copyright on the software, so they would have to negotiate with them. Besides, he was pretty sure they would need to re-write whole sections of code to make it work with fighter aircraft, and tanks. He knew that Winnemucca Systems would be very rich Military Contractors for the next 20-30 years it would take to completely upgrade the US Military. If they could make it work with fighter aircraft, the Air Force might be interested in it as well.

Darrell was busier than a 1-armed paper hanger, and Jim had to hire some help since the military contracts were rolling in faster than he could keep track of them. The Pentagon wanted to implement the Battlefield Situational Display for all 4 branches of the service. Since there was no way Darrell and 4 computer programmers could do all the work, the Pentagon authorized them to subcontract the bulk of the work as long as they would supervise and approve the work. Several small programming companies contacted Winnemucca Systems, and after getting military approval and security clearances, they hired several of them to work on modifying the BSD to work in aircraft, tanks, APCs, etc. The basic code was so elegant that the subcontractors didn't have to write more than a couple of modules and interface programs to make it work system-wide. President Edwards knew a good idea when he saw one, and encouraged Congress to pass funding for BSD installation in vehicles and aircraft for all 4 services.

Since most of the jets used MFDs, instead of installing a new display, they added a button to the display to switch the display to the BSD display, which integrated data from land or air-based radars, and the location of friendly BSD equipped aircraft and vehicles. Friendly forces were color-coded blue, hostile were coded red, and bogies were white. The system proved so good that the only time a fighter had to use its radar was when he was illuminating targets for his radar-guided missiles. With either an E-2 Hawkeye or E-3 Sentry providing detection and data, American Fighters could fly nose cold, and ambush enemy aircraft who didn't have a clue that they were being attacked until the missiles hit if they were targeted with IR missiles. It minimized the load on air or ground controllers, because the pilot saw everything the big radar bird saw, and could fly his own intercept. All the controllers had to do was coordinate strikes, attack, and defense instead of giving them vectors to the target.

Things were going from bad to worse in the People's Republic of China. With Kerry out of the White House, China lost the preferential treatment they were getting, and the State Department was told to whittle down the trade imbalance between the US and China. China was spending every penny they got from the US to modernize their military, but were blocked from getting the really good stuff, and wound up with a lot of second line equipment, but they had a lot of it. They blamed the US for blocking their entry into WMF and canceling their Most Favored Nation status until they reduced their \$30 Billion trade surplus with the US. Several members of the Council of Ministers wanted to dust off an old sneak attack strategy that they had dreamed up in the 1990s. Their knowledge of tactics inversely proportional to their egos, and they listened to the military generals who told them what they wanted to hear, instead of the objective reality that the US Military was a different animal with Edwards in office than it had been under Bill Clinton. They approved operation Red Dragon to begin in 30 days. They started moving any ship that could carry troops or materials to their port cities, and bought ancient rust bucket freighters and container ships on the open market that were only fit for the scrap heap, and got them running well enough to make a 1-way trip across the Pacific. Their "Trojan Horse" attack was possible for only 1 reason: The US Government never

rescinded the lease of the huge port facility in Long Beach from the days of President Clinton, and they had a port that they could hide men and material in to make a lightning strike to seize the interior of the US.

Chapter 49

The morning of January 1, 2006 dozens of harmless looking airliners took off from China. Little did anyone know that instead of Chinese businessmen and tourists, the planes contained elite Chinese paratroopers trained to safely jump out of a 747 at 30,000 feet and fly miles away from the path of the airliner. They were the pathfinders for a follow-on force flying in huge military transports. While they were still off the California Coast and protected from the effects, the Chinese Military detonated orbiting EMP devices, temporarily blinding and disorienting United States radar, satellite and damaging electrical equipment and radio transmitters and receivers. All over the USA, vehicles ground to a halt, traffic lights stopped working, and millions of computer networks dependant on microwave relays stopped working. Long distance phone networks went down with the microwave relays, as well as the Internet. The first indication that anything was wrong at the Ranch was when the power bumped, and an alarm sounded, indicating the Microwave Relay was inoperative. Amazingly, the radios kept working because Susan's husband had installed automatic antenna grounds, which grounded the antennas unless the radios were energized. Since the plane was in the hangar, and no one was out and about. Darrell was confused when the TV went blank all of a sudden, then went to snow. He called Jackie, who was mad because her internet connection went down. When she saw the TV was showing snow, her mind was moving in uncomfortable directions. When she tried to use her cellular phone and got NO SERVICE, that cinched it. She hit the panic button located under Darrell's desk, and told Darrell to get dressed and be ready to evacuate to the bunker for an extended stay. She tried to start the truck, but the engine refused to turn over. She grabbed Max's leash, and they walked over to the bunker, along with a bunch of scared and confused people. Jackie started talking when Manny showed up.

"Manny - you thinking what I'm thinking?"

"Yeah - somebody popped a nuke, or an EMP device. None of our security devices detected a thermal pulse, so it might have been an EMP device - anyway the news is not good. I think we're at war, but I'm not sure with whom. Let's get everyone into the bunker and batten down the hatches."

Manny was right, this was the opening gambit of a Chinese Lightning Strike, and they Zhongdui pathfinders were moments from touching down all over Nevada and Utah. A 747 can hold hundreds of civilian passengers, but did anyone bother to check how many Chinese SEALS it could hold? Passenger comfort wasn't an issue to the Chinese Government which had killed thousands of PLA junior officers and Non-Coms in the crash program to come up with a way to get hundreds of paratrooper/sapper/pathfinders past the weakly defended US border, and position them in such a way to quickly secure their invasion route. The Chinese divided their forces in half, and some headed south

from Long Beach to link up with forces coming up from Mexico to push their way eastward through Arizona and Texas, and the other half would leapfrog northeast, landing from Reno, NV to Salt Lake City UT to control their prime invasion route. The southern attack was a feint, and the real attack was aimed at the heart of America's breadbasket.

Unluckily for Manny, Jackie and the rest of the crew, they were not only along the prime invasion route, but their ranch was to be the Forward Command Center for General Gi of the PLA, the operational commander of the invasion plan. Manny's decision to get everyone under cover quickly saved their lives, since when the team of Zhongdui Paratroopers landed, they had nothing to attack, and their orders were to only fire if fired upon, and to set up a secure perimeter for a follow-on force of paratroopers. So when they saw no one out and about, they wrongly assumed the place was deserted. Manny was following the entire scene on his video monitors, and he was glad he had enough cameras to watch the entire property without moving a camera. All the ROV's were at altitude and camouflaged so they were invisible from the ground, and Manny ordered them to displace laterally to find out if the next attack would occur from the ground, so the Chinese paratroopers never saw them. Several hours later, another group of PLA paratroopers joined them on the ground. They didn't move out of their perimeter, since they didn't have orders to investigate the buildings.

2 hours later, Manny heard a Helicopter, and ID'd it as a French Dauphin 2, also known as the Chinese WZ-9, and it had rocket pods. Since it was a very expensive helicopter compared to the clunky ones they usually flew, he realized this might be some Chinese General's personal ride, and decided that if he could take out the General, he could seriously damage the Chinks plans to take over the country. The Security building had a hidden door that allowed Manny to slither out with all 4 RPG-7 rockets. He knew he'd only need 1 or 2 to destroy the chopper, but he wanted to use the other 2 to kill anyone dumb enough to come to the General's aid. He said a quick prayer, and crossed himself, picked up a rocket and knelt behind the sandbagged bunker, only exposing his head and the rocket. As soon as the landing chopper settled in his sights, he squeezed the trigger, and the resulting explosion told Manny the helicopter was hit. He picked up the second rocket, and as soon as the helicopter crashed the last 50 feet, he fired another one right through the Plexiglas of the cockpit. Since the windscreen was shattered from the first impact, this second rocket flew inside the helicopter and struck the transmission of the helicopter, and blew it sky high, killing everyone within 100 feet. Several Zhongdui got up and charged, and were taken out by the alert Security monitor, and several pounds of IED's Manny had placed. Manny scuttled back into the security bunker, and several surviving Zhongdui fired their grenades from their Uzi's.

Along with the flying suit, the Chinese had been busy designing a minimalist weapons system that would give the average Zhongdui firepower way out of proportion to the size of their groups (4-man teams) and had outfitted them with full-size UZI submachine guns with folding stocks, and had designed a grenade based on the rifle-fired grenade that

was launched from the muzzle of the UZI using a bullet trap to catch the bullet and launch the grenade almost 100 yards, where it had about the same effect as one of the US 40mm grenades.

Once they realized that there were enemy forces, they launched grenades into the big steel buildings, causing zero casualties, but royally torquing Darrell off! Once they launched the first volley, they waited for return fire, and when none came, they were confused, could they had killed all the defenders that easily? Manny was monitoring his scanner when he heard the dreaded news

“This is Sheriff Randall, WAR RECALL in effect. Any Deputies who can make it to the office, check in and get suited up. THIS IS NOT A DRILL! Any deputies who can’t make it in are authorized to use deadly force to protect yourselves and to repel a Chinese invasion, I repeat you are authorized to shoot any Chinese on sight. Since at last count there were 10 Asians living in the county, and they’re all accounted for, if it’s got slanty eyes, Shoot it! All Ranchers monitoring are authorized to use any means necessary to protect yourselves and your ranch. Keep monitoring this frequency for updates, and unless you’re LEO, stay off all the LEO frequencies for the duration. Deputies, only transmit emergency level broadcasts, and go radio quiet, since we’re pretty sure they can monitor our transmissions.

That is all!”

Manny was awfully glad that Maria and the kids were in the shelter, otherwise he’d have to go to Confession again for the oath he swore. He picked up his cellular phone, and called Jackie, and gave her a Sitrep. They weren’t armed for anything but local defense, but they knew that they wouldn’t be getting any help for a while. Jackie suggested that they had enough food and water to last 6-12 months in their shelter, and unless they died of boredom, they were safest where they were. Everyone was in the shelter, and the cattle and the ranch hands were safe, since they were feeding far from the location of the attack. Manny said he’d keep monitoring the situation, and keep them posted. He highly suggested they not do anything to make any unnecessary noise or heat. Jackie said that he didn’t have to worry about that Maria was leading a Bible Study by fluorescent lantern. Manny thanked her, and said to himself “Gracias a Dios!”

They kept watch on the monitors and ROV’s, and there was no further activity from the Chinese. Since the cameras were day/night capable, he’d see anything that was going on outside. Suddenly, he saw movement to the side. They were trying to flank them. Those chinks were in for a surprise, since he had some very nefarious devices guarding their flanks, and triggered several of them, which popped up, and detonated 6 feet above ground, showering a 30 foot area around each with White Phosphorous. He wondered what “Oh Shit we’re Doomed!” sounded like in Chinese? Manny thought “Chinese

Barbeque anyone - Take-out!” He decided to make sure they were all dead, and detonated a pre-arranged spread of IED’s to saturate the area with supersonic shrapnel. He decided to go out and check, put on his Blackhawk assault vest with the Level IIa protection, plus his front and rear chicken plates. It took him several hours to carefully search the compound, then he came back and got Max to double check. Max didn’t indicate that anything living was near enough to worry about, so Manny called Jackie with the All Clear. It took several hours to clear the debris off the shelter, and Darrell swore like Jackie had never heard when he saw his business was leveled. He was grateful that the Pentagon required triple-redundant off-site storage, and he personally backed up everything critical on the server into a removable hard drive that went in a secure floor safe every night, and the safe was fine.

Jackie reminded them that they weren’t out of the woods yet, and should grab everything they would need for a long-term stay and head back to the shelter. Since their vehicles were parked behind the hangar, and obviously the Chinese didn’t want to destroy the hangar (probably because they wanted to use it), all the vehicles were fine. They quickly drove to their houses and transported anything valuable, sentimental, or useful to the shelter under the 3000 Square Foot Community room. Since the basement was 12 feet high, they could easily stack stuff 8-feet in the air, and took full advantage of the storage space. One thing that they didn’t consider was they now had 6 families under 1 roof, so most of the space was dormitory style sleeping accommodations, with a “play room” for the parents to get away from the kids and relieve some stress. Jackie made sure there was plenty of clean sheets, and a small but efficient laundry consisting of 1 commercial washer, and 1 commercial dryer. Manny heard Gene’s voice on the 2 meter, checking to see if Sally was all right. When he heard she was, Manny told Sally, who called Gene. He called back and asked if he could stay with them for the duration, and he’d bring his arsenal, since their shelter was better than his basement, and he’d bring his radio gear too! Manny called Darrell, and they decided that Gene was more than welcome, since he had a FAL and military experience. Gene said he’d call them on the cell or the radio when he was close, so they could open the gate. Manny advised him to avoid the I-80 corridor, and Gene said he’d take a back road to get there. As soon as he hung up, he heard on the scanner that the Chinks had taken the Winnemucca Municipal Airport, and there were heavy civilian casualties. Manny was furious, and hoped President Edwards was launching some ICBM’s at China right now. Manny was confused by the lack of nukes, and guessed the Chinese wanted the heartland intact to feed their people.

The US Military was slow to get the word with their communications degraded, but the Marines at Pendleton put up a terrific fight. They were outnumbered, but they had superior equipment, since the Battlefield Situational Display was being implemented across the entire USMC. They decided to top-down the upgrades, and upgraded their front-line equipment first, as soon as it got back from the Middle East. Since they were in a training phase, they had an entire heavy division training at 29 Palms, which was quickly loaded on their lowboys, and driven close to the action as fast as possible. Every

ship in the fleet was surged to protect them from a nuclear attack, and defend the coast. Several 688-I Submarines got to sink Chinese merchant vessels returning for a second wave of troops. Pearl was running ASW and surged all vessels they had to protect the islands. The Aegis cruisers turned their radar to full power, and their defensive systems to Auto Enable. The FAA was getting out emergency divert orders to all international airlines bound for the US. The entire US was an exclusion zone, and all US carriers were grounded unless flying with military escort to prevent further Trojan Horse attacks. National Guard and Reserve units all over the US were Federalized and issued their equipment.

The Chinese attack wasn't doing as well as they had planned, evidently the Americans had been upgrading their capabilities as well, and when they heard of the loss of General Gi in a helicopter crash, they were downcast, but determined. Once a robber kicked in the door, it was a little late to stop. With the EMP detonation, President Edwards was evacuated to Mount Weather, where he tried to keep in the loop. So far there were no other Chinese Nukes, and the Russians had adopted a defensive posture, and sent word through their embassy that they had nothing to do with the attack.

"God Damn Chinks! I knew they were up to no good, especially when we were selling them the oil, and they were buying military hardware with the money they earned from us. I know we can stop them, because they don't have sufficient shipping to move a large enough army to really hurt us. Maybe when Kerry or Clinton was in office, but not now. I don't want to get into a nuclear war, but those SOB's started it. What was the name of that movie...Right, it was a Tom Clancy novel I read called "The Bear and The Dragon." Ryan was a pretty good President, what did he do when the Chinese attacked - he said something to his Chief of Staff - That's right he said instead of killing the poor private following orders, they should kill the politician or general that gave him the orders, and his Chief called it "the Ryan Doctrine." I wonder if that would work?"

President Edwards called in his Secretary of Defense and told him about his idea, who said that retaliating against the Chinese like that would be risky - they might retaliate, but if no one was left to issue the launch codes, then they just might advert a nuclear war. IF the Chinese realized they were loosing badly, and we were about to retaliate, they might launch against us.

"Gene, what do we have in the inventory that was stealthy, yet had sufficient punch to take out the Council of Ministers, and the PLA's entire General Staff?"

"For point targets and nukes, I'd suggest the TLAM -N Cruise missile. A 688-I could launch 18 of them, but it would take a week or two to get in place."

"I don't think we have a week or two."

“OK, the Air Force has the same missiles co-located with some B-2 and B-1b’s. The B-2 is stealthier, but can’t carry as many. We’ve got several at Whiteman AFB in Missouri that have just been upgraded to carry 8 TLAM-N missiles. I can get them airborne in 2 hours, and to China within 24 hours with 2 mid-air refuels.”

“Ok, Gene, you know the targets. I want them dead with minimal collateral damage.”

“Mr. President, you authorized us to use nuclear warheads, and you’re worried about Collateral damage?”

“I just don’t want one to go goofy and hit Taiwan.”

“The new missiles have 3 navigation systems. They’re so accurate we can target which window we want it to fly through!”

“Really - Cool! OK, make it happen. I want an order for my signature within the hour.”

“What about the PAL codes?”

“The What?”

“It was in your security briefing. Before we can launch a nuke, you have to transmit the code to arm the warhead.”

“OK, tell me what to do and I’ll do it.”

“Right Mr. President.”

The Secretary of Defense wished that at least someone around here had a clue. President Edwards was a good President compared to his predecessor, but almost as clueless about military issues. At least George Bush had a clue. He went off to make arrangements.

Slowly the US Military recovered from the sneak attack, and started pushing the Chinese back, until 5 Chinese divisions started rolling across the Mexican border. The US General in charge of the Southern Defense realized that they had sprung a neat trap, and the US Forces were pinned between 2 huge armored forces, and with no retreat, he paraphrased Chesty Puller “Well, that simplifies the problem!” All over the US, Marine FA-18’s which had been withheld for this one mission were loaded up with JSOWS to take out the Chinese armor. At the same time, NG Warthogs were being flown from their East Coast bases to airstrips much closer to the action. They flew with C-130’s full of their mechanics, ammo for their guns, and enough bombs and rockets to take up every ounce of space on the C-130s. The pilots were glad that the Warthogs were flying formation around them since they were loaded for bear, and were all carrying

Sidewinders just in case. One of the C-130's was a KC-130 fitted with fuel tanks and drogues that the Warthogs refueled from occasionally. They landed at Davis-Monthan AFB, right outside Tucson, Arizona. The base was perfect, since they handled A-10's all the time, and was their west-coast training base. The C-130's and the equipment was just their CO's idea in case the Chinese overran Tucson, and they had to detour to Nellis AFB in Nevada. So far the Marines and National Guard troops were slowing them down.

When the Warthogs arrived, they were serviced and as soon as the pilots were ready to go, were put in touch with an airborne controller riding in an AWACS who was really glad to get the Warthogs, even if they were so slow that the AWACS could fly away from them. He needed CAS bad, and he needed it now. Once they got in range, they were put in touch with a ground controller, who told them some Marines needed CAS RFN, and gave them the coordinates. The Warthogs hadn't been upgraded yet, but the FIST vehicle their ground controller was in, was, and he was able to pass critical data to the Hogs, who rolled in guns hot, and wiped out dozens of Chinese tanks that were giving the Marines fits. Several passes later, they were out of targets, and called the AWACS to see if there were any suitable targets for their Maverick missiles.

The AWACS was glad to hear that, because there were several AA batteries that needed to be taken out. The lead Warthog called back and said "Why didn't you say so, we've got HARMS as well!" Thinking fast, the controller directed the HARM equipped Hogs to the radar equipment, then when they couldn't detect any more emissions, told the Hogs to fire a couple of Mavericks into the battery to make sure. One of the hogs had to dodge some 35mm fire, so they knew that they weren't all dead, and fired a Maverick at the biggest vehicle. His wingman spotted movement, and spotted a truck with a AA gun on the back bugging out, so he engaged it with a short burst of his gun, and the truck burst into flames. "Scratch one truck" the pilot thought. The Flight leader of the Warthogs said they had enough fun, now they needed to RTB to refuel and rearm, since most of them were Winchester, and several were close to bingo fuel. They were disappointed that they didn't get to use their sidewinders yet. Once they had the runway in sight, the Warthogs realized that DM was the forward air base for a lot more than them, as they saw several flights of Apaches preparing to do battle with the encroaching Chinese. Someone was getting smart on our side for once, and seemed to be alternating flights of Apache gunships and Warthogs to keep the Chinese armor under continuous pressure. The Flight Leader hoped the Apaches would save some targets for them. Little did he know that the Marines and Air Force was set to launch a deep strike into Mexico and sever the Chinese Armor from their logistics, then they would destroy the tanks and APCs at their leisure.

Several flights of FA-18's, F-15 Strike Eagles, and F-16s were waiting ready for the launch code and darkness since what few fixed wing aircraft the Chinese brought with them were strictly day fighters. Half the F-16's were configured as Wild Weasels, and the other half were loaded with Sparrows and Sidewinders, and would fly BARCAP for the mission. They knew they'd probably never see an opposing aircraft, but you had to

have BARCAP just in case. At least the F-16's detailed to the AWACS had a real mission, and had scored a couple of kills when several Chinese SU-23's had gotten too close for comfort to the AWACS, and the F-16's were detached to attack them at extreme range in case they were carrying long-range missiles since the converted airliner was a big fat target. At 1800 local, the "Execute Mission" orders were given, and dozens of flights of aircraft from all over the southwestern USA were launched in a pre-planned sequence to get the BARCAP F-16's up first, then the HARM equipped F-16CGs, then the JDAM equipped F-15 Strike Eagles, and finally the FA-18's armed with JSOWS which were closest to their assigned targets. From 1800 to 2400, the air over the Chinese formations was sundered by the sound of waves after waves of aircraft heading south. They thought they had escaped destruction until around 2400 local, the JSOW carrying FA-18's flew over their formations, and dropped the most devastating anti-tank weapon yet devised. The bombs flew to pre-assigned coordinates using their winglets, opened up like a CBU, scattering bomblets called Skeet due to their shape, which scattered and flew to several thousand feet above the formations, where their millimeter radars detected large steel targets, and they each picked a tank or truck to target, and continued their decent. Since there were way more JSOWS than there were targets, the tanks each had 2 JSOWS assigned to them, guaranteeing their destruction. 50 feet above the ground, the shaped charge detonated, melting the steel body of the skeet, and driving it into the tank through the vulnerable tops, blowing the turrets off the tanks and immolating the crews inside.

The news was even worse in the Chinese rear. The JDAMS had destroyed every railroad bridge and highway bridge between their beachhead in Baja California and their mechanized divisions in Northern Baja and Southern Arizona and California. Several follow-on units were destroyed by the JSOWS as well, including several Command Groups that had laagered for the night, and were killed in their sleep. The Chinese never really understood the fact that the US was just as good fighting at night as during the day, and in some respects we were better night fighters, since most other armies weren't equipped properly for night fighting, and had primitive gear at best.

The next morning, the news of the massive defeat of their armored divisions in Mexico reached General Wang's office, and he called for an emergency meeting of the Politburo. Half an hour later, the ministers were debating whether to surrender or launch an all-out nuclear attack when the first of 2 TLAM-N nuclear cruise missiles flew right into the Council of Ministers building in Beijing and detonated. 5 minutes later, the second cruise missile dove into the center of the rubble, and detonated after burrowing 100 feet into the rubble to ensure that anyone who had made their way to the shelters would be entombed there after receiving an immediately lethal dose of radiation. The PLA and PLAN command centers received similar treatment, and the Chinese Government ceased to exist. President Edwards received news of the destruction of the entire Chinese government, then called the Chinese Ambassador, and asked him to come to the White House for a face to face meeting.

2 hours later, an ashen faced Chinese Ambassador passed through the metal detectors, and was escorted by 2 armed Secret Service agents to the Oval Office. Instead of standing outside, they were stationed inside the Oval Office since President Edwards was taking no chances that the Chinese Ambassador would try to assassinate him. He stood when the Ambassador entered, but refused to shake his hand. President Edwards motioned the Ambassador to a seat, then started in.

“Ambassador Chen. I’m sure you’ve heard by now of the invasion of our country by Chinese military, and their absolute defeat. What you might not be aware of, was 2 hours ago, your government and military leaders in Beijing ceased to exist. Right now you are probably the highest ranking Chinese official anywhere in the world. I’m here to discuss ending this war, and our surrender terms.”

“We will never surrender, we’ll launch our Nuclear forces first!”

“Ambassador, 2 hours ago, you lost the ability to launch anything at anyone. Your government and military leadership has ceased to exist. If you wish, you can make a phone call and verify these facts, but I have no reason to lie to you. Now sit down and realize a few things. For decades we’ve allowed you to live with a delusion that you’re the Middle Kingdom, and somehow superior to the rest of the world. Hitler thought he was superior, and paid the price for his arrogance. I’m offering you a choice at this point, the annihilation of the remaining people in China, or help rebuilding China as a free country, and resumption of normal trade. It’s your call - either way, Chinese Communism is as dead as the Dinosaurs.”

“This is unacceptable, our military will retaliate!”

“Mr. Ambassador, Please forgive my bluntness, but What Military?”

Ambassador Chen sat there and fumed for several minutes without saying anything.

“Mr. Ambassador, I’m waiting...I haven’t got all day.”

Suddenly the Chinese Ambassador stood, and the Secret Service Agents behind him reached for their pistols, but didn’t draw them.

“Very well Mr. President, then I won’t take up any more of your time.”

“If you leave this room now, we’re still at war, and your country is defenseless.”

“You’ll have my answer this afternoon. I’d appreciate if you could put off nuking us back to the Stone Age as you put it until then.”

“Ok, but any further attacks or any missile launches will result in the destruction of China.”

“Very well Mr. President. I appreciate your candor and patience.”

The Ambassador bowed and walked out of the door. 30 seconds later, the Secretary of Defense walked in.

“Gene, I want us to stand down for 6 hours, but if the Chinese make any funny moves, we launch everything at them.”

“Yes Mr. President. I’ll have the NSA monitoring Chinese communications and send anything from the Ambassador or the Embassy to you immediately.”

“Thanks Gene, this is going to be the longest 6 hours in my life!”

Chapter 50

4 hours later, President Edwards got a call from the Chinese Ambassador asking for an immediate audience. He agreed, and half an hour later, a much humbler Chinese Ambassador stood in President Edwards' office and presented him a note.

“Mr. President, on behalf of the government of China, I ask you to accept our surrender. I’m sorry it took this long, but as you said, it turned out I was the highest surviving member of the Government, and I had problems locating any other competent authority. This is a declaration of Unconditional Surrender since it appears our country is at your mercy.”

“Mr. Ambassador, please sit down. We have no intentions of continuing this war, or punishing the Chinese people for the shortsighted actions of the old regime. As you know, we used to be the sworn enemies of the Germans and Japanese, and now we’re allies. Even after the Cold War between us and the old USSR, now Russia and the US are allies and trading partners. All we ask is to be left in peace. We can either be the best of friends, or the worst of enemies, and it appears you have chosen wisely. I accept your surrender, and ask your assistance in ending hostilities immediately. You still have PLA forces in contact with American Civilians, and they are currently killing US citizens. Somehow you need to get word to your forces in the field to cease fire in place, and I’ll go on National TV and Radio to tell everyone the war’s over. Unfortunately your EMP bomb destroyed or crippled our communications satellites, so some Americans might not get the word.”

“Mr. President, I’m sure whatever means you use to contact your citizens will be adequate, and I hope we can bring a quick end to hostilities. I propose that I order the Chinese troops to either withdraw if they aren’t in contact, or else surrender in place. I further propose that the Government of China reimburse the US for damages caused by those bandits in power at the start of this war. While we regret the use of nuclear warheads over Chinese soil we understand and agree with the American decision to kill those responsible for this act of banditry.”

“Ambassador Chen, if the government of China had only asked for help, we would have gladly provided some way for China to feed itself. Our food production technology is decades ahead of yours, and if you stop using the bulk of your trade income to buy weapons, and instead buy tractors and implements to modernize your farms, within a generation you will be out-producing the United States in most categories of produce. I’m sure Caterpillar and John Deere would love to build factories in China to build tractors and combines for use in China, and tractors and road building equipment to build up your infrastructure to support your population. In short, if you set up a more democratic government, you can count on the full support of the United States.”

“Mr. President, there are progressive elements inside our government that survived the nuclear reprisal, and are saying the same thing. They’d like to model our government on the French or British model.”

“Mr. Ambassador, please forgive me, but I think you’d be better served if you emulate the British than the French.”

“Why is that Mr. President?”

“Frankly the French haven’t won a war since the 1800’s, and yet their arrogance is on par of what your country used to be. We bailed them out of WWI and WWII. Sometimes, I feel we’d be better off if we’d have just let Germany keep France after WWI.”

“I do remember hearing a hysterical joke about Euro-Disney having to stop their nightly fireworks show because the French Army kept surrendering!”

“Exactly Ambassador Chen!”

“Very well, Mr. President, I accept your terms, and thank you for your help.”

“One last favor Ambassador. It would help if we did a Joint statement. It might end the fighting quicker.”

“Ok Mr. President.”

They got up and the President shook the Ambassador’s hand, then they walked down to the Press Room, where cameras and microphones were set up, and a skeleton crew of Cameramen and various recording personnel were stationed.

“Ladies and Gentlemen: As of 1200 EST, the US accepted the surrender of Chinese forces. Those who sought to conquer this country are now dead, and Ambassador Chen has agreed to an immediate cessation of hostilities, and a return to normal relations. In furtherance of that, I’m asking all US citizens and troops to disengage from any Chinese troops and allow them to surrender or withdraw. Ambassador Chen has a brief statement. Mr. Ambassador.”

“Thank you Mr. President. I hereby apologize for the loss of life and property caused by the short-sighted banditry of the former regime. President Edwards used nuclear cruise missiles in a surgical strike to eliminate those who had planned and ordered the attack. The people of China had no knowledge of the attack, and we want to live in peace. In furtherance of that peace, I’m hereby ordering all Chinese forces that hear this transmission to lay down their arms and surrender even if they are currently engaged with American troops. Hopefully the Americans will get word to their Military quickly to

cease offensive operations. I also want to clarify that the Mexican Government had no foreknowledge of our attack, and their territory has been invaded as well. I also apologize for any Mexican losses of life or property. If you'll excuse me, I need to get back to China to assist in the formation of a new government."

As soon as they left the podium, the word was broadcast all over the US, and the military radios were all broadcasting cease fire orders. Within 24 hours, all fighting had ceased as the Chinese got the word, laid down their weapons, and started waving white flags, or withdrawing if they weren't in contact. American units stood down, but civilians were slow to get the word, and millions of Chinese soldiers were killed by armed American civilians who were still in contact. The Chinese force in Winnemucca had excellent radio comms, and raised a white flag as soon as they got word, and assembled in the center of the airfield, sat down without their weapons to await capture. Sheriff Randall got word in time to avoid a massacre of the surrendering Chinese, then thinking quickly got on the air, and said "All Deputies and Civilians, Cease fire and do not pursue. The Chinese Government has surrendered. Continue to defend yourselves, but don't attack surrendering or withdrawing Chinese units. If you have prisoners of war in custody, treat them according to the Geneva Convention, and call me so we can have a deputy or the military pick them up."

Manny heard the broadcast and was whooping and hollering, yelling "Gracias a Dios, the war's over!" Then he called the shelter and gave them the good news.

Over the next months and years, the US rebuilt and rearmed. The government helped Darrell rebuild his building, and used the money to build even bigger and more durable buildings with an Emergency Shelter 3 times the size of the original and 2 stories tall, since they felt like sardines in a can after 2 weeks in the shelter. The NV National Guard assisted them with cleaning up and disposing of the Chinese military hardware. The Colonel in charge was amazed at how they withstood an attack by a Chinese Elite fighting force, and took extensive notes. The Colonel's report made it up the chain of command, and resulted in the Commandant of the Marines, with the agreement of Congress, promoting Sergeant Manuel Hernandez of Winnemucca NV to Master Sergeant and awarding him and his family US Citizenship. The Secretary of the Navy contacted Darrell after they had rebuilt, and discussed several projects he would like to try and make work, and awarded a multi-year R&D contract to his company. Darrell and Jackie never had any kids, but set aside trust funds for all of Manny's children for their college. One of the girls went on to become a Pediatrician, and all of them graduated college. Years later, when Max died, Jackie got another Rottweiler from the same couple, and until they died many years later, they always had a Rottweiler, but never another Max.

The End

